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The Sea Bandit; OR, THE QUEEN OF THE ISLE.

BY NED BUNTLINE.

CHAPTER I.

It was evening; and in the palace of the Intendente-General of the department of Matanzas—which overlooked the loveliest bay on all the coast of Cuba—beauty and valor, as well as masked villainy, were gathered to the enjoyment of a festival; for it was the eve of the birthday of the Senorita Maraquita de Regla, the lovely daughter of the Intendente-General, the Marquis Garcia de Regla.

Gay uniforms glittered amid the lace and gauze and gossamer drapery of the lovely Cuban ladies. There were Spanish, English, French and American officers present. The latter, though evidently regarded with great favor by the fairer sex, seemed to be looked upon coldly by the Spanish officers; and it was evidently a forced or constrained courtesy which the marquis himself tendered to them; for though he had politely saluted the four American officers, who came in at an early hour of the evening, and whom he had evidently met before—for he addressed each by name—he had from that moment avoided them, and paid more particular attention to other guests.

With one of these—a dark and swarthy Spaniard, in plain citizen's dress—he seemed to be most intimate; and as this person is one with whom we have yet much to do—a character whose history yet lives on record, as well as upon the lips of tradition—he merits a special introduction as well as description.

Don Eduardo Quiestra, as he was known at the palace, had suddenly appeared there about a year before the festival-night which opens this story. No one but the governor knew who he was or where he came from. The governor was alone—or, at least, his secretary and daughter only were with him—when, unannounced, this person had walked into his private office, and both the daughter and secretary were astonished at the unusual agitation which the marquis exhibited at first, and the marked respect, even deference, which he showed afterward to the person whom he introduced to them, not as a noble, but as a plain senior.

But the secretary valued his place too much ever to make allusion to it afterward. The daughter loved her father too well to wish to pry into his secrets; for she, like most children, believed that her parent could not do wrong, and would not introduce to her an evil man. Yet then, and ever after, when Don Eduardo Quiestra looked at her with his black eye—at times as cold as ebony, and then as fierce as lightning lurking in the midnight cloud—she

trembled within her heart, and felt an unspoken terror.

Dressed plainly, but richly—a costly diamond on his finger, and another in his shirt-bosom—standing over six feet high, with a form at once elegant and muscular—a bearded face, the features of which were expressive of stern courage, but not of ferocity—and a lofty forehead, marked, but not disfigured, by a diagonal scar as from a saber-cut across it—this individual was well calculated to attract observation, even among so many; for he was unlike them all. In his manners, rather haughty and distant, he avoided such contacts as he disliked—though, when he chose, he descended from his pedestal of reserve, and in his conversation, especially with the ladies, made himself very agreeable.

There was an air of "mystery" about him which made him attractive in their eyes. His

Just eighteen—which is womanhood's full age of development in that ripe and delicious clime—Maraquita possessed the oriental features of her Moorish descent, with the fairer and richer complexion of her native Castile. Her figure could not have been improved; it was faultless: for, although not so tall as some of the beauties there, it lacked in no proportion. Her expression was intellectual—soulful. She looked like one formed alone to love and to be loved. Of such a one as her the poet wrote:

—“Such around her shone
The nameless charms unmarked by her alone;
The light of love, the purity of grace—
The mind—the music breathing from her face—
The heart, whose softness harmonized the whole;
And oh! that eye was in itself a soul!”

She was very beautiful; and so thought the young American lieutenant, who, having secured her not unwilling hand for the first contra-

dance, was now promenading the handsome saloon with her hand upon his arm. And he, with his erect, manly figure, clear blue eye, rosy complexion, and curling brown locks, seemed well mated to so beautiful a creature; for every step, every motion, every expression, proclaimed him to be what he was—one of Nature's noblemen.

And who but the God-made are noble? Talk of blood and lineage in beasts; but in men, bah! Where among the demagogues of the present day are the blood-descendants of the men of “76?” Where, even upon European or Asiatic thrones, are the blood-descendants of Richard Cœur de Lion, Charles of Sweden, Alexander of Russia, Timour the Tartar, or Frederick the Great? Or, rather, what are they?

Ever and anon—and so 'twill ever be—some unknown man of obscure parentage, like the Napoleon of Corsica, will arise, and willed by the strong spirit within him, dash upward above all his fellow-men, to cast the lie into the faces of those who proclaim nobility as a heritage.

CHAPTER II.

“Who is that young officer who, walking with your daughter, seems to chain her ear down to the accents of his tongue?” asked the Senor Quiestra of the marquis, while the latter, with a cloud upon his brow, and half-concealed anger in his eye, glanced toward the couple whose description closed our first chapter.

“His name is Allen; he commands the American war-schooner in the harbor. I wish he were gone, for this is not the first time he has paid marked attentions to my child,” replied the marquis, in a low tone.

“His is one of the vessels sent out by the Yankee government to prevent the collection of tribute to the black flag, is she not?” asked Quiestra, while his passionless face lighted up for an instant with a sneering expression.

“She is,” replied the marquis.

“Introduce me to him, and then draw your daughter away without arousing a suspicion in him that it is intentional,” said Quiestra.



THE SEA BANDIT.

lavish expenditure of money in occasional presents to some of them, and his charity to the poor, proved him to be as unselfish as he was wealthy. But though he sometimes carelessly alluded to his country-residence, he told no one where it was, and if asked, evaded the question. When in Matanzas, a suite of rooms in the palace was assigned him; when he went away, it was in such a manner, and so secretly, that no one knew where he went. Only one servant attended upon his person—a young man of singular beauty and dignity for one in a menial position, whom he called Mariano, and whom he treated with an almost companion-like kindness.

Having thus introduced him, we will leave him; and after having, for a moment, glanced at the loveliest gem of the evening—Maraquita de Regla—we will close this chapter, and hurry forward on our path of romance.

The marquis bowed in acquiescence, and, accompanied by the former, moved across the room in a direction to intercept his daughter and her escort. He did so, but only at the upper end of the room, as they were about to step out upon a piazza which overlooked the harbor, whither Allen had invited his fair companion to look upon his vessel, as she lay upon the moonlit waters of the bay like a bird asleep, but ready in a moment to lift her wings for flight.

"Permit me to introduce my particular friend, Don Eduardo Quiestra, to the notice of Lieutenant Allen," said the haughty marquis to the young American.

"I am very happy to become acquainted with any friend of the Marquis de Regla!" said Allen, frankly extending his hand to the Spaniard.

To the surprise of Maraquita, who had noticed his habitual reserve, especially toward all the foreign officers, Quiestra not only took the proffered hand, but shook it warmly; but she had not time to observe more, for her father, saying: "There is the Countess de Villaheneva, my child, whom we have not welcomed," placed her arm within his, and hurried her away—leaving Quiestra and Allen in a position where they would necessarily be obliged to improve their recent introduction.

"The marquis is rather unceremonious in depriving me of my late partner in the dance," said Allen, rather disappointed in the loss of a wished-for walk and talk upon the piazza.

"Perhaps he thinks that his child's warm heart is endangered when in contact with a fair-haired son of the North. She is his only one, and we cannot blame him that he guards her closely," said the Spaniard, speaking in a careless tone, and evincing no interest in the matter by any expression of his face.

"I never would wrong her noble heart," said Allen, quickly. "He need never guard her from me, for I would lose a life in her defence, or for her honor!"

"Ah! you love her, then?"

Quiestra said this in such a cold, utterly passionless, and disinterested tone, that Allen, naturally ingenuous and confiding, thought not of duplicity or a danger of betrayal, and he said:

"Yes, with all my heart!"

"And is your love returned?"

The Spaniard asked this question in such a way that Allen began to be upon his guard. He replied:

"I have already said too much upon this subject to a stranger—more than I should do."

"You have said so much," replied Quiestra, in a quiet way, "that to reply to my question will not add to your error, if you have erred. A confidence should never be halved."

"In this case it must be," said Allen, abruptly.

For a second—not a second, a breath's time only—fire flashed in the Spaniard's black eye, but the next instant it was as calm and cold as before.

"As you will," he said, kindly. "I have no right, as a stranger, to intrude myself upon your confidence: nor, perhaps, should I offer a friendship which might be useful in promoting your future happiness; for I believe that few men have more influence with the Marquis de Regla than myself."

"Forgive me; I am over-cautious, perhaps. But this is a delicate matter; only the lady and yourself are aware of my attachment," said Allen, again grasping the hand of the Spaniard. "I will not withhold my full confidence from you. The lady does return my affection; but she fears her father's anger, and will not permit me to make known to him my feelings and wishes, as I desire."

"She is right, and possesses more sense and prudence than most of her sex. Her father is a strange man, and must be approached with caution and in accordance to his nature. But let us walk upon the piazza; there are too many listening ears around us here."

Arm in arm, as if they had been two old friends, these utter opposites in looks and nature passed from the saloon to the piazza, to the wonder of more than one who knew Quiestra, and had never before seen him touch the arm or hand of a male acquaintance, or descend from the icy throne of his reserve.

CHAPTER III.

"Botheration to ye, hould on! Hould on, I say, and I'll have the ivory adrift before ye can toss off a glass o' grog!"

Reader, permit me to introduce to your notice, Surgeon Florence O'Shaughnessy, of the U. S. schooner *Alligator*, a gentleman with all the "rich brogue of Erin" rolling off his tongue, yet claiming, and *rightfully*, to be an American-born citizen, for he was born under the *American flag*, while his father was American Consul at Dublin.

The doctor's height was not less than six feet, yet unless he stood by the side of another person, you would think him very short, he was so fat. His body was built much like a rum-puncher, and its capacity for acting as one, was very frequently tested by the doctor. His head was very small, and his legs were not of a size to correspond with his trunk, in fact they looked too frail to support such a weight above. In truth, put a small pumpkin on top of a cask, putty on a pug nose, cut a wide mouth, and stick a few bristles on the top for hair, punching two small holes for eyes, and then put two broomsticks beneath for legs, and you will have a very tolerable representation of Doctor O'Shaughnessy.

His particular occupation at the moment when we introduce him to the reader was that of extracting a tooth from the mouth of the negro cook of the schooner. He had got his turn-key upon the grinder, and his assistant, the medical steward of the vessel, was holding back the negro's head by the wool, while the doctor, with both hands gripping the handle of the instrument, and his feet firmly set against the carriage of the gun on which he had seated the "subject of operation," was pulling with a vigor which made it certain that *something* must come up by the roots—either wool or ivory. The negro, with both hands set against the doctor's protuberant abdomen, was involuntarily assisting in the operation, while his eyes rolled in agony, and his face assumed a bluish hue, with the pain of the toothache, and this additional infliction.

As the doctor gave an additional jerk when he cried out "hould on," the obstinate tooth gave way, and the doctor's body went with it; and his next position was horizontal, so far as his body was concerned. But his legs flourished in the air, and his long right arm was raised with the instrument and the tooth in token of triumph; while the freed negro, uttering a yell of mingled delight and pain, rushed away toward the galley, fully determined never to have the toothache again on board of that vessel.

Assisted by the steward, the doctor regained his feet in a moment, and as he regarded the tooth, or rather *tusk*, which he held, he said:

"Be jabers, 'tis no wonder it pulled so hard! It has roots like an ould oak. The next one I have to pull for the nager I'll have the capstan manned! I've exhausted myself entirely, I'll have to take some of my own medicine!"

By way of explanation, we must state that the doctor's principal rule of practice was confined to what he called the three great "Bs"—Bleeding, blistering, and brandy.

In this case, brandy was the medicine which he considered necessary, and he took a dose as soon as possible.

CHAPTER IV.

When Lieutenant Allen and the Spaniard stepped out upon the piazza, a lovely scene greeted their eyes. Directly beneath their feet was the beautiful garden of the palace, teeming with flowers and fruits, all glittering in the golden moonlight, or mellowing off into the shadows of the trees—but beyond lay the bay, rippling like dancing silver in the wind and moonlight. Several large vessels of war lay in the anchorage usually allotted to vessels of that class, and nearer in toward the town were a few merchantmen of different rigs. But by far the prettiest of all, was the taut and rakish little schooner of which Allen was the commander. Her black hull was long, sharp fore and aft, yet of great breadth of beam at and just abaft the fore-rigging; it lay low in the water, and up above it rose spars calculated to spread an immensity of canvas. Though she was a half mile off, the moon glittering upon her brass eighteen-pounder amidships, and her six carronades of a side, enabled the Spaniard at a glance to note her armament.

"I need not ask which is your vessel!" said Quiestra to Allen. "None but your countrymen can build or rig a vessel like that!" and he pointed to the schooner.

Allen was gratified with the compliment, for he not only felt a sailor's pride in the vessel which he commanded, but also an honest and patriotic emulation in the country which he served.

"Is your schooner very fast?" asked the Spaniard.

"She has never been beaten, except by one vessel, the *Pilot*, of New York, built by the same man, a vessel of the same size and rig. She can beat us slightly off the wind, we are her match when close hauled!"

"Indeed! Is that vessel in your Government service, also?"

"No, sir—she was purchased for the Mexican privateer service, just before we sailed, and is probably on her way to Vera Cruz, by this time, under American colors, there to assume Mexican. As her captain intended to stop either at Key West or Havana, on his way out, we directed him to bring out our letters!"

"I should like to see her! I have a passion for beautiful vessels. You would hardly think so by my dress and appearance; but I am a sailor myself or was in my younger days!"

"I had a suspicion that you had tasted salt water—perhaps you have seen service!" and Allen glanced at the scar upon the Spaniard's brow.

"Some in my younger days!" and a grim smile lighted up the face of the speaker. "If I am informed rightly of your object in these waters, you are likely to see active service!" said he, in continuation.

"I hope so!" said Allen, enthusiastically. "I would give three years' pay to lay yard-arm and yard-arm with, or to stand upon the same deck with *Colcefrinas*, the Terror of the Gulf!"

A dark flush ran over the face of the Spaniard, and his great eyes again flashed for an instant like those of a fierce animal about to spring into battle; but Allen was looking at his vessel, and did not observe the agitation which the Spaniard exhibited, though it lasted only an instant. When it passed away, he said:

"Your ambition is but natural, yet were you to meet this redoubtable chief, you might find yourself overmatched. I have heard much of him of late years. But why do you single him out of so many piratical leaders? There is *Domingo*, almost as famous as he; *Velasquez*, and others!"

"Because he is the acknowledged leader of them all—the bravest—the most ferocious!"

"Ferocity and bravery do not go together, young man!" said the Spaniard. "This *Colcefrinas*, if the report of his enemies be true, possesses courage without cruelty, and even though he claims a right to exact tribute from all who cross his path, he never sheds blood, I have heard, except in cases of resistance!"

"That may be so; yet, nevertheless, he is a pirate—his hand is raised against every flag, and we are bound to destroy him!"

"If you can catch him!" and again that shadowy smile came out upon the Spaniard's face. And his tone was so sarcastic when he spoke, that Allen, who had been looking over the water, turned to catch the expression of his face. But it was now as calm as when he made his introductory bow.

"Are you well acquainted with the coast of this island?" asked Allen.

"As well as one can be who from his childhood has been reared upon its shores. There is scarce a bay or inlet that I have not visited at one time or another!"

"I wish that I knew so much of the coast. Our charts are imperfect—only the larger indentations of the coast are down, and the very spots which pirates would seek for hiding-places are omitted. We work in the dark!"

"Being after dark men, perhaps it is best!" and again the Spaniard smiled. "When will you sail?" he asked in continuation.

"As soon as either of the vessels appointed to act in concert with me arrive!"

"I should like much to take a cruise with you in search of that *Colcefrinas*! I should like myself to meet him, though I would not care to cross swords with him!"

"I ask no better fortune than *that*!" replied Allen. "But if you are serious in your desire to take a cruise in the *Alligator*, as my guest, you will be very welcome."

"A thousand thanks! I have some business which calls me to my estate at an early hour in the morning, and must go there. But if you do not sail before I return, count upon me as making one at your table on your next cruise. And now we will return to the saloon. I will so manage, that you will have an hour's

converse with the fair Maraquita, without interruption from either her father or that vine-gar-faced old aunt of hers!"

"Oh, thank you, my kind friend—thank you a thousand times! Excuse the unjust suspicions which made me for a moment hesitate to bestow my full confidence upon you!"

Arm in arm, as they had gone forth, the two gentlemen now re-entered the saloon. Maraquita, surrounded by a group of admirers, but still resting upon her father's arm, was near, and to her Quiestra at once led the way.

"Maraquita, I have a word to say to you in private; be so good as to leave your daughter in the care of this gallant officer, who will doubtless keep all pirates at a distance from so fair a prize, and retire with me for a few moments," said the Spaniard, to the father of Maraquita.

The marquis looked astonished, seeming hardly to understand the words of Quiestra; but at a look from the latter, which commanded rather than asked, he dropped the arm of his daughter, which, with his implied consent, was instantly placed in that of Allen, and taking the arm of Quiestra, he accompanied that mysterious person back to the piazza, which he had so lately occupied with Allen.

"What does this mean, señor—you surely do not wish to forego your claim on Maraquita's hand, in favor of this audacious North American?" cried the marquis to Quiestra, the moment that they were alone.

"Not for an instant, my dear marquis," replied the latter, blandly. "But I have got to beat this Yankee at his game, and must use himself to do it. You know his errand to this coast, and what its success will cost both you and me. I have already wormed myself into his confidence, and that which I have just done will add to my power with him. He loves your daughter and she loves him—the fool told me so!"

"*Mil maldiciones!* I will shut her up in a dungeon!"

"You will do no such thing. It is too late to either starve, or chill, or frighten the love out of her heart. But I care not for that! When she is my wife, I'll draw the reins tighter; at present, like a decoy, she must be used to blind him to our work, and to lure him to the point where I shall decide that he stops, and stops forever! I shall plan all this work. Garcia de Regla, I only ask you to execute and obey! Remember the past—had it not been for me you would not be what you are now—only by my aid can you reach the post you desire, and become Governor-General of Cuba!"

"Do not speak of the past!" said the Marquis; and he shuddered and closed his eyes, as if he wished to shut out some terrible vision.

"I will not, if you do a man's duty for the present. Now listen to me. I leave for the rendezvous in an hour. There is a schooner on her way out from the north which I must capture, for she can out-sail the fastest one in their fleet—which this young Yankee commands. Use every means, except open force, to keep him from going to sea before I return; for I intend to come back and go to sea on a cruise with him, as a friend and pilot. He wants to see Colcefrinas, and he shall see him!"

"*Madre de Dios!* You will not place yourself in his power?"

"No—I shall not be in his power. I am, with him, only your friend, Don Eduardo Quiestra—not—"

"Breathe not your name here, for Heaven's sake, *capitán mio!*" said the Marquis, with anxiety and haste.

"Don't terrify yourself—I shall not. But mark my words, and obey my directions implicitly. If you permit this Yankee free access to visit your daughter while I am gone, he is so much in love, that he will forget his duty, and linger longer than he would do otherwise. See that it is done!"

"But señor, such freedom may prove her ruin; she has warm blood in her veins, and he—"

"Is so chivalrous that he is honorable. Though I hate him, I would trust him with her if she were my wife! Have no fears, but obey. I shall leave in an hour. Mariano will remain here and aid you. If anything especial occurs before I return, send him to me!"

"Do you not trust that youth too far?" asked the marquis.

"Have you ever seen a look or heard from his lips a word that would tend toward my betrayal?"

"No, señor."

"Then I do not trust him too far. But now let us return to the saloon; and I will go away as soon as I can do so unobserved!"

CHAPTER V.

A half hour later, while the music of the festival came faintly upon his ear, Quiestra stood in the chamber which was always assigned to him when he visited the palace. His dress was not now the plain, peaceful citizen's garb, which he had worn in the saloon of the Intendente General. He wore a close-fitting shirt of mail, which completely protected his person, from his neck to his hips. Over this he drew a loose frock, or blouse of embroidered velvet, and buckling a belt around him, to which a short, curved sabre was attached, placed in it a brace of gold-mounted, long-barreled pistols, and a long, broad-bladed dagger. Upon his head he wore a close-fitting cap, while the nether limbs were almost concealed by a pair of heavy-looking, but really light turkey-leather boots, which came considerably above the knee.

Upon a chair close by hung a large sea-cloak, adapted to concealing the person, as well as to protect it from what is seldom known in that country, inclement weather.

Before him stood the valet, or page we might call him, to whom we have alluded once or twice before. He was not tall for one of his sex; in figure rather slight, but even more elegantly proportioned than his master. His features were exquisitely classical; his complexion so rich and transparent that the mantling blood seemed ready to come through the skin when he blushed, as he almost invariably did when his master spoke to him. His great black eyes were shaded by long, silken lashes, and about his temples, over his white brow, and clear down to his shoulders, hung masses of curling hair, as black and as soft as the down on the raven's breast. His dress was neat and tasty, a tunic buttoning or rather lacing with loops across his chest and up to his neck—loose trousers below, and a morocco slipper fitting on a foot small enough to have belonged to a woman. He seemed young, not more than seventeen or eighteen years old.

"Mariano, my good lad, I am going to pay a brief visit to our rendezvous, and perhaps to take a little fresh air on blue water. But I shall not take you with me this time!"

A look of pain and disappointment expressed the feelings of the young man, but he said nothing.

"My absence will be very brief," continued the Spaniard, "and it is my wish, that without appearing to notice anything that goes on in the palace, you note everything: particularly mark the movements of the lady Maraquita and the young American officer, who commands the schooner in the harbor. Should their folly reach so far as to look like an intention of elopement or clandestine marriage, see that it is prevented."

"Will my master take offence if I ask him a question?" asked Mariano, in a low voice full of music.

"No, my good lad—you know that it takes much to make me angry with you!"

"Does the señor, my master, ever intend to marry the lady Maraquita himself?"

"Not while your mother lives, my boy! I would not be unjust to her, nor break her heart. She is my queen, and shall be while she lives! But why do you blush and tremble so?"

"Anxiety for my mother, señor—nothing more," replied the young man.

"You need have no fears, then. But take the heed I bade you. This American is sent, with many others, to hunt out and destroy the free rovers of the sea; and we must outwit him. He deems me a friend; if he questions you, your ready wit will frame proper replies. I have gone to my estate in the country; you comprehend me?"

"Yes, my master."

"It is enough, then. Good night. I have leagues to pass over before the day dawns."

The young man took the Spaniard's extended hand, kissed it reverently, and then helped to put the cloak upon his form. A moment later, Quiestra had departed, and he was alone.

Then Mariano, with a deep sigh, sat down, and, hiding his face with his hands, seemed to lose himself in sad thoughts.

CHAPTER VI.

Along the shores of the Queen of the Antilles may be found many a lovely bay; many

a pretty little river gushes out through her flower-covered cliffs into the deep-blue of the Gulf Stream. Yet among all of these there is no spot so beautiful as that which I am about to describe.

About twelve or fifteen leagues east of Cardenas, there is an extended line of small islands—all of them very lovely—which seem to stand as outposts between the gulf and shore. About midway of this group, where the rocky cliffs of the mainland rise dark and frowning, a passage has been pierced by the hand of Nature through the stern barrier—which is invisible until one is close upon it—and by one unacquainted with it would be passed unobserved at a cable's length. It is narrow—so narrow that no square-rigged vessel could enter without having her yards cock-billed; and the most careful hand at the helm would have all that he could do to pick his way in through the tortuous channel between the lofty cliffs. But, once in, a bay large enough to anchor fifty ships-of-the-line would meet his eye—a bay bordered all around by a snow-white beach of sand, to the very edge of which a vessel could be laid. So entirely land-locked is this bay, that not a pulse of the ocean-surges from outside could wake a wave upon its breast. A crescent-shaped plateau of level land stretches the width of a half mile back from the bay; and all around in the rear of this, lofty and apparently inaccessible hills form the background.

Upon this plateau—much of which is under cultivation, and teems with the various luxuriant productions of the tropics—are many little houses, built of cane, and thatched with the broad leaves of the palm. In the midst of these, and facing the narrow entrance to the bay, is one of larger size and greater architectural pretensions—for it boasts of a verandah, a cupola-room in which to enjoy the balmy evening air—and in its finish is more perfect than the others. And before it is a mounted battery of six long eighteen-pounder cannon, so leveled as to sweep the entrance to the bay. All over this plateau, and among the cottages, women and men are walking in company, and little children are seen at play. In the bay, lying moored to the shore, are three armed vessels—two schooners and a sloop—while a vast number of fast-rowing boats are drawn up on the beach, with their oars and boat-hooks stacked near them, ready for use. Not a flag to denote the nation or calling of these people could be seen. But that it was peaceful, was doubtful; for nearly every man wore weapons in his belt, and seemed prepared to do martial service at a moment's notice.

It is the morning of the second day since the festival of the birthday of Maraquita de Regla. We will for a moment look within the larger house upon the plateau which we have described. It is magnificently furnished, and in its draperies, hangings, mirrors, carpets, sofas, ottomans, chairs, and tables, it would seem that the art and industry of all nations had shared; for they were as various as they were rich and costly. From the style of many of the paintings, and the nature of some of the gold and silver plate which was almost strewn around (it appeared so profusely), it would seem that churches had helped to adorn this most singular and palace-like dwelling.

But of yet another ornament we must now take note. In an apartment whose large windows, opening from the floor to the ceiling above, looked out on the bay in front, and on the northern side toward the mountains in the northeast, a lady stood, leaning with a listless air against a marble statue, the form of which did not seem more perfect than her own. It was of the "Medicinan" height—five feet six inches; yet she was at least two inches taller, perfect in every proportion. Her age was fully thirty-five; yet her face possessed all the freshness of youth. Her great black eyes flashed with the fire and passion of sixteen, and not a thread of silver could be seen amid the great masses of black, glossy hair which curled down about her white neck and shoulders. Her expression was one of majestic dignity. She seemed as if she had been used to exact and command reverence and respect from all who approached her. Yet there was a voluptuous and dreamy look that told that love could find—probably had found—a home in the depths of her nature.

The sound of a bugle from the mountain-top to the north-east reached her ear, and produced an instant change in her appearance. Her eyes flashed, and her countenance lighted up with a look of joy.

"It is Eduardo!" she murmured; and taking a gold-mounted telescope from a table close at hand, she raised it in the direction from whence the sound came; and a look of disappointment flitted over her face as she looked, and she said: "He comes alone; my child is not there! What can it mean! O Heaven! should I suspect the truth, and—"

She did not finish her remark; for a man, armed and dressed with some insignia which betokened him to be an officer, entered.

"The captain is coming, señora," said he.

"Yes, Pablo; I heard his bugle. Raise his colors on the flagstaff."

The man bowed and retired. A few moments later, a black flag, with two crimson swords crossed in its centre, and the name so dreaded in all the southern waters—"COLOFRINAS"—embroidered in letters of gold beneath them, was hoisted from a staff, near the battery in front of the house; and, as soon as this was done, a similar flag floated from each of the vessels in the harbor, and the men from every direction hastened to the plateau in front of the flagstaff, and there formed in military order to receive their chief, who could now be plainly seen descending the mountain-side with rapid footsteps.

They were a wild, rough-looking gang, armed each to suit his taste, and dressed in such garbs as suited their will and convenience. They were, judging from their looks, desperate and hardened men, culled out from almost every nation. There was the swarthy Spaniard, the sallow Frenchman, the yellow Portuguese, the florid Anglo-Saxon, and the olive-hued Creole.

As the chief, who was none other than him whom we have known as Quiestra, approached, the murmur of many voices which had filled the air, ceased, and all was silent when he stepped in front of the line, and replied to the salute given by Pablo de Canova, his second in command.

"Send the crews on board the vessels instantly, Pablo, and be ready to start on a cruise in an hour! I go with you myself."

These were the only words uttered by Colcefrinas. These spoken, he turned away as haughtily as he had come, and entered the house.

The instant that he had crossed the threshold, a pair of round, white arms were thrown about his neck, red, ripe lips were pressed burningly to his own, and the fair woman, whom we have so lately briefly described, murmured:

"Eduardo! Amor mio! I am so happy that you have come again!"

"I am glad to see you, my Monona!" he answered, far more coldly than her caresses seemed to merit. "But I have little time now for acts or words of endearment. I have hurried hither for a purpose which I must speedily accomplish. I must put to sea to try and capture a vessel which I need. The coast will soon swarm with a host of enemies, who seek to destroy the whole confederacy of the Free Rovers. I must beat them back, and I will!"

"Amor mio, why stay here to meet them? You have a kingdom's wealth in your possession, you can need no more on earth though you out-lavish princes in your expenditures! Why not lower your flag forever, and do as you have often in past times told me you would, go to some land where the name of Colcefrinas is unknown—where you have never been seen; and there, with a new name, and rank, which your gold can buy, and my love, which only death can chill, be happy!"

"What, Monona? Do my ears hear you advise me to bend the knee to the dogs of a nation which has not yet counted a half century of existence—me, a son of old Castile!"

"I did not advise you as a Castilian, but as one whom I loved—whose peril is my agony, whose peace is my bliss!"

"You mean well, Monona, but my course is laid, and I shall follow it. These insolent Yankees need a lesson, and they shall have it. The next thing they will do, after they crush out the Free Rovers, if they should do it, will be to stop our planters from getting negroes to till the soil with. That done, they'll ask for the Island itself; and if Spain yields not to the beggars, they'll take it! They need a lesson, and Colcefrinas shall be their teacher!"

The woman said no more, but a mournful expression looked from her great, black eyes. "Where is Mariano?" she asked, after a brief pause.

"I left him behind, at Matanzas, to watch the movements of some American officers

there, who are awaiting more vessels before they come in search of me."

"Will he not be in danger? You promised me, when I first consented that he should act as your page and servant, never to let him leave your side."

"He is as safe, yes, more free from peril beneath the roof of Garcia de Regla, than he would be here; for here, if the Americans discover my place of rendezvous, blood will run like water. To give them their due, we must say, they fight well—more like devils than men, for they won their liberty against terrible disadvantages! But all their navy cannot conquer me here, if there is no treachery beneath my own flag!"

The woman said no more, although her looks told that she was far from being happy now. Colcefrinas noticed this, and in a kinder tone, said:

"Cheer up, Monona mio—cheer up! Bring me some wine. I am tired, and will pledge love and health to thee!"

She hurried into another apartment, and soon returned with a large, golden goblet filled to the brim with wine.

"Drink you, and bless the cup with your lips, my sweet one," he said, as he passed one arm around her waist, and with the other gently pushed back the goblet.

"My lord, my life, your health and our undying love!" she said, and she raised the cup to her lips and drank, while the blood in her cheek, as if emulous of the color of the wine, flushed deeper and brighter. For it had been rare of late that his arm had pressed her form, and now its touch gave new life into her heart.

He took the cup from her and drained it to the bottom; then tossing it carelessly aside, drew her down upon her knee, and kissed her white brow. With a low cry of gladness, such as a young child utters when the mother comes, for which it has been weeping, she threw her arms about his neck, and while the tears of gladness trickled down the rosy pathway of her cheeks, she gave him a hundred kisses on his lips, and eyes, and broad, high forehead. This joy lasted but for a few moments; for as he glanced toward his vessels in the bay, he saw that their sails were loosed, and he sprang to his feet.

"When will my Eduardo come back?" asked the lady.

"When he has succeeded in his enterprise!" replied the pirate, quietly. "Meantime, let my brave Monona prove herself competent to guard her home and my treasures. The look-outs on the mountains must be vigilantly maintained—those on the islands be on the watch night and day. Should our foes, by any fatal error on our part, or any good fortune of their own, discover the entrance to the bay, the battery must tell their doom. Should they enter, let the hidden mines be fired, while you seek safety in the cave known only to you, myself, and Mariano. I know my Monona will do all this!"

"With God's help I will!" she responded; and she crossed herself, as if the actions contemplated were such as God would bless.

Again he pressed a kiss upon her brow, and turning upon his heel, departed.

She watched him until he reached the beach, where he launched a light shell of a boat of peculiar construction, sharp at both ends and decked over (like the canoe of an Esquimaux) except where the rower must sit. Into this he sprang, and soon placed himself alongside of the largest of the schooners.

Springing on board, he left the little boat to drift in toward the shore or be picked up by some of the men there, and at once gave such orders, that in a few moments all three of the vessels were under sail and slowly working out of the harbor.

CHAPTER VI.

"What a singular influence this Señor Quiestra seems to possess over your father!" said Allen to Maraquita de Regla, as soon as they had moved to a place where they could converse without being overheard, on the night of her festival, when the Spaniard, known as Quiestra, had withdrawn the marquis from them.

"It is more singular that he should exert this influence to favor you!" said the young lady. "Although he has not yet himself directly proposed marriage to me—for he knows that I hate him—he not only has made such a proposition to my father, but I fear has either gained the consent of the latter to the step by his will, or by this same mysterious influence,

forced it from him. More than once has my father hinted that I am to become his wife!"

"And will you?" asked the young American, in a low, sad tone, as he fixed his eyes upon hers.

"Will I?" she responded—and the hot blood rushed in a flood up through her veined cheeks, until her very brow was all aglow—"will I? Not from your lips—not from your heart should come that question! No, no! a thousand times no! Sooner, far sooner, would be the bride of Death! He is—I am sure he is a—"

She paused, trembled, and turned as pale as death; for close before her, looking at her with flashing, threatening eyes, stood young Mariano. She did not finish the sentence she had commenced, but turned away; for the eyes of the strange youth seemed to cast a spell upon her tongue, and to chain her will to silence.

Allen had not noticed the youth, for he came and passed like a shadow; and he asked:

"What were you about to say, dear Maraquita? What is this strange man?"

"My father's friend, and, as you say, a strange man!" said the lovely girl; and she still trembled, for she seemed to feel that she had been on the verge of endangering her father, by the exposure of some secret.

"Let us go and join in the dance again!" she said, seeming to wish to be placed in a position where questions of delicacy could neither be asked nor answered.

They were soon upon the floor, gliding away in the soft and dreamy waltz, played as Spanish musicians know how to play it.

The Spanish are the only people in the world who make a *luxury* of waltzing. The Dutch—excuse me, the Germans—make of it a perspirative *labor*; the French go through on railroad time; the Americans go the race-horse gait, and the English the rough-road, stage-coach style. But the Spanish glide along like rosy clouds in a breeze-fanned sky, or like dim shadows over softly rippling waters. But here I am again, out of the waltz of my story.

No sooner had the marquis received his final instructions from Quiestra, and seen the latter depart for rooms, than he took occasion to rejoin his daughter and the young American officer. To the utter astonishment of both, as well as pleasure of one of them, he seemed in the most affable humor, and remarked that he was very happy to see them enjoying the pleasures of the evening so much.

"I hope, lieutenant," said he to Allen, "that your stay will be long in our port, and that, while here, your visits will be frequent, and without restraint!"

"I shall be only too happy to make my visits frequent!" replied Allen; and rest assured that no call but that of duty will hurry me away from the hospitality of your port!"

The marquis bowed, and passed on, leaving the heart of Allen bounding high upon the crested waves of hope. But Maraquita was sad. She knew that this sudden change of manner in her father masked some new design, at the bottom of which lay her antipathy—Quiestra. And her greatest misery was, that she could not fathom the design—knew not how to meet what she felt in her heart was a plot to wreck his happiness and her own.

But, concealing her thoughts to the best of her ability, she moved on with him as her sole partner during the rest of the night, much to the distaste of many an officer who would have shed blood for the honor of having her hand even in a single dance, and more to the surprise of others, who wondered why her American-hating father should leave her in such perilous company so long.

But so it was; and when, as the rosy heralds of the coming day came swiftly from the eastern sea-board, Allen found himself once more on board of his beautiful schooner, his heart was too full of the joy of the last few hours to permit of his thinking of sleep.

There are times of peril as well as times of trouble, when sleep will not come to the eyelids of the weary; and there are times when joy and happiness forbids one to close his eyes. May such sleeplessness be the fate of my readers!

CHAPTER VII.

The Pilot, of Norfolk, the consort-built of the Alligator, was indeed a beautiful vessel; and so thought Charley Howard, her temporary commander, who was engaged to take her to Vera Cruz, there to deliver her to the Mexi-

can government to act as a privateer. He was in the Bahama Channel, heading for the Cuban coast, and in the act of taking his meridian observations to learn his latitude, when a man forward, on deck (for he had no look-out aloft), sang out: "Sail ho!"

Dropping his quadrant, Howard seized his spy-glass, as he cried: "Where away?"

"A point or two to windward of the weather bow, sir—not one, but three sail, if my eyes don't lie!"

"You're right," said Howard, as he looked in the direction given. After a short reconnaissance, he said: "There are two schooners and a sloop. I suppose they're Cuban coasters, for we should be nearly in to the island now. Luff, there, you at the helm—let her come up a point, and we'll speak the strangers!"

The schooner, which had been heading a little to the northward of west, now hauled more to the wind and westward, and as the vessels which Howard intended to speak, were standing on a course which threw them athwart his bows, they very rapidly neared him.

The young captain of the schooner looked at them from time to time, but saw nothing which led him to believe them to be other than coasters, as he had at first supposed. But few men were seen upon their decks, and the sails were negligently trimmed, as those of the lazy Cuban droghers usually are—and as to this day you can see them along that coast; they were hugged close up to each other, as if there was more safety in company than in being apart.

The breeze was not fresh, yet stiff enough to send the sharp-built schooner some six or seven knots through the water. In an hour, or little more, the strange sails were close aboard, and Howard shortened sail to speak them, taking in his foresail and flying-jib, and throwing his fore-topsail and top-gallant-sail aback, while he hauled his jib-sheet to windward.

As his headway deadened, one of the strangers crossed his bow, while the other two headed directly for him to leeward, all having Spanish colors set.

"Look out there, you lubberly Spanish cubs, or you'll run afoul of us!" shouted Howard, as he saw the danger of contact.

"Excuse us, Señor Americans; we couldn't well help it!" cried a tall and splendid-looking man, who leaped from the bow of the nearest vessel on to the quarter-deck of the Pilot, and who was instantly followed by fifty or sixty men, armed to the teeth, like himself.

Taken completely by surprise, himself and his feeble crew entirely unarmed, Howard could offer no resistance. Yet the proud Maryland blood in his veins boiled, and angry light flashed in his eye, as he looked the leading intruder in the face, and boldly asked what the deuce he meant by coming on board of his vessel so unceremoniously?

"We are rough people, Señor Americans!" said the leader; "and we do not understand ceremony. But we have need of a fast-sailing vessel, and as yours seems to be speedy, we feel an inclination to try her for a time!"

"Then I'm to understand that you're a set of bloody pirates!" said Howard, bitterly.

"Oh, no! by no means, Señor! We are gentlemen, Free Rovers—no more! We exact tribute, it is true, from those who come within our range; if they are at all obstreperous, we sometimes make them walk the plank; but if they are accommodating, and give us all they have with a good grace, why we generally let them keep the most valueless of their possessions—life!"

"Very kind!" said Howard, bitterly. "And I suppose you'll spare my crew, now that you have them unarmed, and entirely in your power?"

"Yes; but have you no favor to ask for yourself?"

"I have. Will you grant it?"

"If it is not such a one as will compromise me as a man, I will!" said the other.

"It will prove whether you are a man or not!" said Howard. "You wear a sword—I have one in my cabin; and all that I ask is a chance to measure weapons with you on this deck!"

The dark eye of the Spaniard flashed, for the tone of Howard was most insulting. He paused a moment, and measured the form of his intended competitor with a scornful glance.

"Do you know who I am, young man?" he asked, after a delay of a minute or more.

"Who you are, I do not know! But what you are, I do know. You surely are a pirate, if you refuse to fight me, you are a coward!"

"No man lives who can call Edward Colcefrinas a coward the second time!" said the pirate leader, in a quiet tone—dangerous, because it was so quiet. Go and get your weapon, young man, and if you can conquer me, you and your vessel shall go scot free!"

"I am contented with the condition!" said the brave young American, and he hastened to his state-room for his sword, a weapon with which he was not unacquainted, and which, in the hands of his gallant father, had done good service in the war of 1812 and '14.

In a few moments he returned, and the pirate leader, in spite of the murmured remonstrance of his men, who disliked his unnecessary exposure to danger, prepared for this singular and impromptu duel.

There was not much parade, for Howard—who cast away the scabbard of his weapon as he came on deck, to show that he intended to find another sheath for the blade—at once began the attack, and that with a skill and impetuosity which for a time rather bothered the pirate, and forced him to keep upon his guard and to act solely on the defensive.

But Howard could not for any length of time exert so much vigor, and as every lunge and cut he made was coolly met and parried by his antagonist, he soon began to feel that he had taxed his powers too heavily at the start. And by the ease with which the pirate met his most cunning feints and thrusts, he soon felt that he had found his master. In a short time, instead of attacking, he found himself necessitated to stand upon his guard without being able to return a lunge. And as the blood of the pirate warmed, his bright steel was more than once crimsoned with the blood of his over-matched antagonist. Yet he inflicted no mortal wound, and only seemed to see how near he could come to taking life without doing it—as savages do sometimes when they torture their captives.

"Have you not lost blood enough to cool your temper, señor?" at last said the pirate, as he beat down the guard of his weakened opponent, and held him entirely at his mercy.

Howard made no reply, but springing back to a fresh position, again raised his weapon.

With a skillful turn of his wrist, Colcefrinas wrenched the weapon from the hand of the young American, who unarmed, but yet unyielding, folded his arms upon his breast, and awaited the expected death-blow. But it did not come.

With a quiet smile upon his face, the pirate chief reached out to the flag which dangled from the main peak halliards, and wiped his sword upon it. "You fence tolerably well, for an American!" said he to Howard. "When I have leisure, I will give you some lessons which will improve your style. But at present I have not time. By the way, a friend of yours, Lieutenant Allen, of the Alligators, said that letters for his squadron were expected in your vessel. Have you a mail on board?"

"Yes!" said Howard, moodily. "Perhaps you will take the trouble to deliver the letters yourself?" he added, tauntingly.

"Most undoubtedly I shall!" said Colcefrinas, in a gentle tone. "Lieutenant Allen and myself are on the most friendly terms. I would not permit his letters or those addressed to any of his officers to be delayed a moment!"

"Allen your friend? Why he is sent out to hunt up and destroy such bloody pirates as you are!"

"Yes—and I am going to help him. He told me how fast your vessel was, and I made up my mind to procure her for that especial service!"

"You mock me, sir!"

"You are in error, Señor Americano—I am very serious. I expect in a very few days to see Mr. Allen, and I shall not only deliver his letters, but tell him that the wicked and remorseless pirates have captured the fastest schooner that has ever worn the American flag!"

"Tell him that if Charles Howard had only known that pirates were near, he never would have been taken alive!" said the American, bitterly.

"Your message shall be delivered!" said Colcefrinas, with a smile. "And now we must part, for time just at the present is valuable to me! Is your long-boat in good condition?"

"Yes! But why do you ask?"

"Merely to know if it will stand the voyage

which you and your crew are about to make in it!"

"So you intend to put us adrift in it?"

"Yes, señor. You are excellent at guessing!"

"You will permit us to have provisions, water, sails and oars, perhaps, in your generosity?"

"The two first you may have! But I can only spare you one oar. That will keep your boat head to sea, and if a gale does not come up to swamp you, you may be so lucky as to be picked up by some passing vessel. I may send your friend Allen to look for you!"

"You are very kind—I hope the day will reward you in the next world, if you miss your due in this!" said Howard, in reply.

An hour later, he and his crew in the none too capacious long-boat of the schooner, were alone upon the heaving waters of the Gulf Stream, their frail boat steadied by a single oar, being almost even with the water's edge. Their only hope of salvation in life was, that some vessel would pass before a gale should arise, and pick them up.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Well, gentlemen, you who have been so anxious to see service will soon have a chance!" said Lieutenant Allen, one morning, some ten days after the occurrence of the festival spoken of in our first chapter. His first officer had just reported that three vessels, American men-of-war, were coming up the harbor; and as he had only waited the arrival of these to commence his search for pirates, he had no further excuse for lingering in that too enchanting spot.

"Faith, that's blessed news, and good for the dyspepsy, cap'n dear!" said O'Shaughnessy, the surgeon.

"A disease which will never trouble you, doctor!" said Allen with a smile.

"That's true, blessed be the knowledge that keeps it from me!" said the doctor.

"Here is a package of letters for you, sir, just brought on board by a stranger from shore, in a small boat!" said a petty officer, handing the package to Allen.

"Letters from home and by the Pilot!" exclaimed the young officer, as he tore open the package. "Forwarded by Colcefrinas, the Pirate, with his compliments to Lieutenant Allen! Darnation! Where is the messenger who brought these letters? Bring him to me instantly!" added the officer, as he read a scrap of paper which was attached to the package.

"He rowed away as soon as he handed the letters over the side, sir! He did not come on board at all, and is ashore long before this time, sir?" said the petty officer.

Allen made no reply, but tore open a note addressed to him in the same hand that the scrawl was written in, and his face flushed with anger as he read it. No wonder; its contents were:

"If the Yankee who commands the Alligator can spare time from his dalliance with the daughter of Gareia de Regla, and would like to measure swords with Colcefrinas the Pirate, he can have an opportunity. The latter has taken the schooner, Pilot, and thinks her very well adapted to his business. Not having any use for the private letters of the officers of the pirate-hunting squadron, Colcefrinas takes pleasure in transmitting them to their destination. He deems it unnecessary to send the government dispatches which he found in the Pilot, as he wishes to preserve the autographs of the Secretary of the Navy, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Colcefrinas can be found on his cruising-ground in the Bahama Channel, and takes this opportunity to assure Lieutenant Allen of his distinguished consideration!"

Allen did not hesitate long after perusing this letter. Turning to his first officer, he said:

"Have all ready for sailing in an hour, sir! As soon as the other vessels come to an anchor, send a boat on board of each, telling them that I have heard from the pirates, and shall at once sail in search of them. I have some business on shore, which attended to, I shall at once weigh anchor. Let the gunner and armorer look to their stores and see that nothing is lacking for service when we sail!"

These orders given, Allen sprang into his gig and was quickly rowed to the shore—where, giving directions to his crew to remain in the boat ready for his return, he laid his course

for the palace, whither he went with hurried steps.

CHAPTER IX.

"You have sad news for me! I know it! A dark cloud has rested, shadow-like, upon my spirit all the morning, and all the long night I have tossed restlessly upon my couch, annoyed with terrible dreams!" said Maraquita de Regla, as Allen entered her presence but a few moments after he left his boat.

"Not sad news, but good, my love!" he responded, gayly, "or at least, it is sad in but one thing—I must leave you for a time. I have heard from Colcefrinas, the pirate, and if he is true to his challenge, will soon have the pleasure of meeting him on blue water. When he and his gang are exterminated, then I will return to your side; and it will be your own fault, my loved one, if we are ever apart again—for if your father then refuses me your hand, I know that you will keep your promise, and be my bride without his consent!"

"I will, if you come back! But, oh! I so fear that you never will come! I feel a presentiment that death is near to one, or both of us!" said the lovely girl, and she clung all trembling to his arm, as if she would avert the fate she dreaded, or share it with him.

"Ah, lieutenant, I am glad to see you! I observe that other of your national vessels have arrived in our port!" said the father of Maraquita, entering at this moment, but not appearing to notice the position of his daughter, which she changed in an instant, when she heard his voice.

"Yes, Señor Marquis!" replied Allen, "but they, as well as myself, will soon be forced by the stern call of duty to tear ourselves from the hospitality of your port and town!"

"Why, you surprise me, lieutenant. When and whither do you sail?"

"Immediately, and in search of Colcefrinas, the pirate, who has sent me an audacious challenge!"

"Colcefrinas? Sent you a challenge?" asked the marquis, in the most utter astonishment.

"Yes, señor! And it will not be long, I hope, before I am ready to make him regret his cool audacity! By the way where is your friend Quiestra?"

"He? Why do you ask, sir?" answered the marquis, very much agitated.

"Because he promised to take a cruise with me, as he knew the coast well and I did not!"

"He is here, and ready to keep his promise!" said a deep, full-toned voice; and as all three turned toward the open door, the Spaniard known there as Quiestra made his appearance.

The marquis, who had at first seemed suddenly and greatly agitated, recovered his presence of mind in an instant, and said:

"You are welcome back, Señor Quiestra! Have you just arrived from your plantation?"

"As you can see by the dust of travel on my person, I have, Señor Marquis!" said the other. Then, turning in the most friendly manner to Allen, he asked:

"How go matters with you, *amigo mio*? Prosperous, I hope?"

"So, so! But I sail in an hour—do you intend to go with me?" replied Allen, to whom he had spoken.

"If you please. A cruise at sea once more will be a novelty to me, and my knowledge of the coast may be of benefit to you. But excuse me a moment, if you please. I have a message to send back by valet, Mariano, to my plantation, and then I shall be ready to attend you. Marquis, I would speak a word with you in private, if your leisure will permit it!"

The marquis followed the Spaniard out, and Allen was again left alone with the idol of his soul, his beloved Maraquita.

"Do not trust that man, Quiestra!" said the latter, the instant they were alone. "I feel that he meditates some dark evil toward you!"

"If he does, he will be foiled, for I am ever upon my guard!" said Allen. "He shall not have it in his power to injure me, and should he be so foolish as to attempt it, his punishment shall be swift and sure!"

In a little time Quiestra returned alone, being now armed as when we last saw him.

"I thought that weapons might be of service on this trip, lieutenant, so you see that I have come provided!" said the Spaniard, with a friendly smile.

"So I perceive, sir; and I hope there will

be occasion for weapons to be used before long!"

"Truly, so do I! It is some time since I have seen the color of blood, except when reflected in a maiden's blush, or the flush of a thin-skinned man's cheek! But if you are ready, I am!"

"I will not detain you, sir—I have a word to say to this lady, and will overtake you before you can reach my boat at the quay!"

An angry flush rose to the Spaniard's brow, but he made no reply, only bowing with mock gravity to the lady, as he went away.

I do not like to be intrusive; and were I to see two lovers in the act of parting for a long or a short time, I surely would close my ears to their words, and my eyes to their motions, if I were so fixed that I couldn't run away and leave them alone. Therefore, if you please, excuse me from being even pen-present at the parting interview of Allen and his sweet lady-love. It is enough that they parted

In sadness and tears,
To meet not for months,
Perchance not for years—
A load on each spirit,
A cloud on each soul,
With eyes that could scan not
Their destiny's scroll.

CHAPTER X.

The hour which he had named had scarcely passed, when Lieutenant Allen stood once more on the deck of his saucy-looking schooner, and her crew were busy in rounding in her cable, and loosing her sails, preparatory to getting under way. His consorts, delayed on their voyage out by hard winds, and calms, were short of water, and could not sail in company with him, but their commanders sent him word, that they would soon join him on the cruising-ground to which he was bound.

The schooner soon had her anchor aweigh, and headed down the harbor under a press of canvas. Allen—whose heart was evidently left behind—kept a spy-glass in his hand; and so long as a tower of the palace of the Marquis de Regla could be seen from his position on the quarter-deck, his eyes were bent in that direction. But at last they faded in the dimness of the distance, and land itself became indistinct; and then, with a sigh, Allen laid down his glass, and turned to look at the trim of the sails. As he did so, he saw the Spaniard, Quiestra, who with folded arms was also looking shoreward, and seemed to be in a thoughtful mood.

"With this breeze we will be up with Cardenas by daylight, will we not?" he asked, in a careless way.

"More, we will be beyond there, and among the islands of the coast, where Colcefrinas and his *confrères* are said to have their haunts!" replied the Spaniard.

"I am glad to hear it. And I presume you are!"

The tone of Allen in the last remark was rather interrogative.

"Oh, yes," said Quiestra. "I am fond of excitement. But supposing you were to capture this Colcefrinas, what would you do with him?"

"Do with him? Why, hang him to the yard-arm, of course!" said Allen.

"Without trial?" asked the Spaniard quietly.

"Yes! What chance does he give to his unfortunate victims! He is a murderer, and a wretch whom it would be a burning shame to spare, if he was once within our power!"

"What think you he would do with you were you in his power?"

"I neither know nor care. I should neither ask nor expect any mercy from him!"

"And yet you might receive it all the sooner that you did not crave it!"

"You seem to know much of his character!" said Allen, regarding his guest rather closely.

"Only from report!" replied the other. "I would have to be deaf were I not to hear of him, for no one is more talked of than he. He has friends as well as enemies, even amongst law-abiding men, for report, while it magnifies his evil acts, also gives him credit for some good and generous ones!"

"Well, all the reports I am anxious to hear concerning him are, the reports of his guns!"

"You may be gratified before another sun sets!" said Quiestra, quietly; and he passed into the cabin, and went to the state-room which Allen had assigned him. He was seen no more that night by the young officer.

CHAPTER XI.

While her lover was present to sustain and soothe her with kind words, Maraquita nobly bore the ordeal of parting, but when he had gone, feeling herself all alone—for there was no sympathy for her among those who knew not her secret—she hid herself away in a curtained alcove in the room, and gave vent to her sorrow in a flood of tears. While her heart spoke its grief in heavy sobs, her father stole softly in, and approached her without attracting her attention. And he looked upon her with an expression of deep pain, for several minutes before he spoke. At last, in a tone of deep feeling he uttered her name. She started up from her seat and endeavored to wipe away her tears; but they came all the faster, and she put her arms about his neck, and laid her head upon his breast, and wept all the more.

"Why do you grieve so, my daughter?" he asked at last—and his own eyes were moist while the question trembled on his lips.

"I am so unhappy, father!" she sobbed.

"Why should you be unhappy, my child? You are idolized by all who know you—every luxury at your command—you possess beauty, grace—"

"And a heart, my father! A heart!" she cried, vehemently. "No one ought to have a heart, who would be contented in this world!"

The marquis made no reply, but seemed to ponder over the philosophy of this idea, for a time—for there is philosophy and truth in it.

Maraquita was the first to speak.

"Why," said she, "did this friend of yours, whom you call Quiestra, go with Lieutenant Allen?"

"The one whom I call Quiestra?" echoed the marquis, and his face paled. "That is his name!"

"Not the one he is known by, where he is best known!" said Maraquita, boldly—for her tears were now dried up, and she was once more a woman, rather than a child. "But you have not answered my question. Why did he go with the young American?"

"Because he was invited to go by him?"

"A self-invited guest. A volunteer, and for no good!" said Maraquita. "But I have put the brave lieutenant on his guard, and—"

"Girl, what have you said or done? Fiends of fury! if you have exposed him to capture, you have ruined me!" cried the marquis, turning livid with rage, and grasping her slender arm so roughly that she uttered a low shriek of pain. "Speak, you ingrate, speak—what did you say to the milk-faced North American?"

"I bade him be upon his guard; for I felt sure that this pretended Quiestra was a traitor and a villain!" replied Maraquita.

"You did not name him?"

"How could I? I do not know his real name! I only know that his true name is not Quiestra, and that he is not a planter. Your own terror of him, proves him to be a villain. You would not fear an honest man!"

"Girl, you know not all, yet you know too much! Get you to your room, which you will not leave again until I accord permission. And mark you, blot every remembrance of this North American from your mind, for you will never see him again. He will, with his meddling associates, soon be food for the sharks, and when again Col—"

The marquis paused suddenly, for in his anger he had not paused to think if he were adding to her knowledge of his secrets.

"Well, sir, why did you not finish your remarks?" said Maraquita, whose quick ear had caught the last syllable which had fallen from his lips, and upon whose mind a new and wild thought suddenly fixed itself.

"I was about to say, that when the Señor Quiestra returned again, you might prepare to become his wife!"

"You meant when Colcefrinas, the pirate, returned!" said Maraquita, suddenly; and her dark eyes seemed to look into her father's very soul.

"Great Heaven! Girl you are mad to speak his name here. Even that is not his real name!"

"Oh, no, I suppose he has a dozen *aliases* to use whenever they are needed. And you, a proud old Castilian, the descendant of an ancient and noble line, would force your daughter to wed a miscreant pirate, a lawless murderer!"

"Child, I am in his power!" groaned the marquis.

"Deliver him to justice! Hang him, and then you will not be!" said the spirited girl.

"You do not know his power. He has the wealth of kingdoms in his hands—an influence in Spain which will make or crush me here. I stand upon the verge of a precipice—do as I wish, and you will draw me back to safety and power. Thwart me, and I am lost!"

"And to save yourself, you would sacrifice me, soul and body!"

"Child, he has wealth, power!"

"And is steeped in crime; red with the blood of the innocent, black with sins which never can be washed away!"

The marquis made no instant reply, but paced to and fro in an agitated manner for some time. At last he muttered:

"To your room, girl! My plan is formed!"

"And so is mine!" said Maraquita, in an under-tone, as she sullenly obeyed her father, who followed her out.

"And so is mine!" said yet another voice, when they were gone; and Mariano, the valet of Quiestra stepped from the concealment of a curtain, whence he had overheard all that had occurred.

"So, my good master does intend to play my mother false, and to wed this fool of a girl!" he said, bitterly. "If she loved him, I would put her out of the way. As it is, she does not, and can be spared. But the marquis will do well to lock her up, for she knows too much about my master, as well as himself, to be permitted to go tongue and hand free."

Having looked out carefully to see that his way was clear, Mariano left the room. And as all hands have left us alone, we'll leave, too.

CHAPTER XII.

It was, for the Alligator, her second day out from Matanzas. Heading along the east, or rather the north-eastern side of Cuba, with a fresh breeze from the N.N.W. on her quarter, she had passed the port of Cardenas and other small smuggling holes, which are plentiful along those shores, and reached a point where high mountains inland, and a rocky coast yet nearer, gave token of a sterility of inhabitants. The sun was just up, and coming red from its blue bed in the eastern Gulf Stream, cast a crimson glare on the few islands and rocky points which could be seen far away on the starboard bow of the schooner.

It had just struck seven bells—a half hour to eight, when Allen came on deck; for he had remained up late, and, perchance, slept but little after he had retired.

Quiestra, who had risen long before, was on deck, and looked as quiet and fresh as if he never had cause to lose an hour of sleep or feel an instant of mental annoyance.

"Well, señor, do you know our whereabouts?" asked Allen of the Spaniard, as he came on deck.

"Yes; very well. These islands are called *Los Diablitos*, or the Little Devils!"

"Ah! for what reason?"

"The one who is second only to Colcefrinas generally makes his head-quarters hereabouts!" replied the other. "He is called Diabolito, because he is little and utterly devilish in his disposition."

"Well! I hope for a chance to meet him. I may be able to teach him a Christian lesson!"

"Your wish may be accomplished!" said the Spaniard, dryly. "Your look-outs are dull of eye; I see four vessels lying close under the point of land two or three points to our lee bow. They are under easy canvas, and evidently watching our motions!"

"You are right, sir!" cried Allen, suddenly aroused to excitement. "All hands to their stations, at quarters, and as sail-trimmers. Look out men, there is work for you ahead!"

Three minutes later, every man on board seemed alive and wide awake for the probability of a sight at, and an engagement with, the pirates, of whom they had talked so much ever since the commencement of their cruise. The officers went from station to station to see that all was ready for service. Rigging, gun-tackle, and canvas were all looked over; and a very few minutes had elapsed when the schooner was reported in thorough fighting order.

And her commander was in a good humor to indulge his crew, if theirs was a desire to see work. As his craft drew in toward the land with a breeze which made her spars bend and her hull creak, his eyes sparkled with additional light, for he saw that the ves-

sels which he supposed to be piratical were well-manned, and seemed in no way inclined to avoid a contest.

"Are you acquainted with the coast here?" asked Allen of Quiestra, as by his orders the schooner was headed directly for the sails in sight.

"I am—so well that I can say, if you head the course you are now on twenty minutes longer, you will be high and dry upon a coral reef."

"Ah!—the soundings are good here."

"And will be until you run from twenty fathoms to two, in half a cable's length."

"Then those vessels await our approach so quietly because they think we cannot reach them?"

"That probably is so! But suppose you fire a gun and show your colors. Perhaps they then will let us know who and what they are."

"I will test them!" said Allen, and he gave the necessary orders.

As the American flag unfolded its stars and stripes from the peak of the schooner, and the blue smoke of one of her bow guns rose in the air, almost simultaneously from each of the vessels in shore, colors appeared. They were the same which we once before have described—black, with two crossed swords in crimson in the centre, and the name of Colcefrinas in golden letters below.

Allen, looking with care through his telescope read the name and noted the colors.

"The rascally pirate is ready to meet me, but the odds are in his favor!" said he to Quiestra. "That is evidently the fleet of Colcefrinas!"

"Had you not better return to Matanzas, and wait for your consort?" asked the Spaniard, quietly, yet rather in a sneering tone.

"No, señor, no! I can allow them their odds and beat them. All I ask of you is to pilot me into the harbor where they seem to feel themselves secure."

"I will do so, sir; but the largest schooner seems to be willing to meet you. She is heading off south-east by south, in a channel which leads to open water."

"And that schooner is the Pilot!" said Allen, who had been looking at her closely through his glass.

"Ah! That then is the vessel of which you spoke to me the other night?"

"Yes, and she has been since taken by Colcefrinas, whether in fair fight or by some ruse of his, I know not. How shall I steer to meet her?"

"Hand all your light sails and haul on a wind. There are reefs to leeward of you which must be weathered; and if you haul close on a wind, you'll be in gun-shot of the schooner when she gets clear of the island shoals, which she now is threading."

Again Allen gave his orders, and soon the Alligator, under short sail, was hugging the wind and luffing away from the dangers under her lee. While her course took her directly away from three of the vessels which showed the flag of Colcefrinas, it brought her nearer and nearer to the Pilot, which steadily stood out for the open sea, as if those on board sought to meet the pirate hunters on equal terms. For, regarding speed and size, the two vessels were very nearly equal. What the crew of the Pilot now was, Allen could not tell, for very few men showed themselves on her deck. But there was room for plenty below. Allen knew it, and expected soon to find proof that he was matched, if not over-matched, so far as numbers were concerned.

The two schooners stood on until not more than two miles apart, and the probability of their soon being in telling gun-shot of each other, grew into a certainty. But suddenly, as such things ever come in that coquettish latitude, signs of squalls coming from the westward were seen, and the Pilot hove about and headed in for her former berth.

"She declines to meet me!" muttered Allen, bitterly. "This Colcefrinas is a coward!"

"Prudence is not cowardice, sir!" said Quiestra, who stood by his side. "You had better take in your canvas quickly, or he will have to show his generosity by rescuing a shipwrecked crew before sunset."

"What do you mean?" asked the lieutenant.

"That a white squall is sweeping down upon us, and the sooner sheets and halliards are flying the less trouble you'll have!" said the Spaniard.

"A dark squall, rather than a white one!" muttered Allen, as almost in an instant black

driving clouds seemed to shroud sky and water. He had given orders barely in time to save his canvas and spars, for while the men were aloft taking in the one, and the schooner obeying her helm, was heading off shore so as to take the wind abaft, it came like the ebullitions of Irish friendship—in a gush—such a one as would have laid the schooner on her beam-ends if she had not been so well handled as she was.

It came like the charge of a mounted army, sullen and heavy, wild but steady, sweeping over the inland waters which had been calm, and lifting them up in frothy foam. It came like the first angry burst of a man in power, who knows that his power is not "for all time," but for a moment, fierce, wild, but began to flicker away before its first rude thunders had died into echoes.

Yet it was strong enough to drive the Alligator far away from the coast, in the two or three hours it lasted.

"No hope of seeing the infernal pirates again to-night!" muttered Allen, after the squall was over, and his vessel once more headed in toward the coast.

"The best of hopes! The very best, if you desire to meet them!" said the Spaniard, who seemed ever to be at hand when his thoughts were on duty.

"How so?" asked Allen.

"Because we will now have the breeze light from the north—a hazy and misty night; and I can easily take you into the harbor where their craft lie. They will think you blown off by the squall, and be off their guard!"

"If you can take me in my fortune is made. I never will forget the service you do me!" said Allen, warmly grasping the Spaniard's hand.

"I do not think you will!" said Quiestra, quietly. "But bid your helmsman attend to his courses. If I am your pilot, my directions must be obeyed, for we are on ticklish ground now!"

"I know it. Give your courses, and they will be followed!"

"Set her head west and by north now," said Quiestra. "Keep your lead going. When you shoal to four fathoms let me know. Meantime, if you please, I'll go to my state-room, and look at an old chart which I have there."

"That man seems honest, and I must trust him!" said Allen, after Quiestra had left. "Yet I cannot forget the warning of Maraquita. But if he should lead me into peril, his would be the first life to pay for his treachery. He dare not mislead me! I am weak to mistrust him!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"Why, child, how pale you are—are you sick?" asked her whom we have met once as Monona, of the one whom we have known so far as Mariano, his confidential valet and servant.

"Only tired, mother, only very tired, for I have come far and fast!" replied the youth, as he sank, half fainting, on a sofa near to her.

"Where is my lord—where is Colcefrinas?"

"With the very men who are in search of him! In disguise on board of one of the United States men-of-war!"

"Heavens and earth! He will be lost. They will recognize and slay him!"

"It should not matter much, mother, to you if they did!" said Mariano, coldly.

"Why, child?"

"Because he is untrue to you. He is engaged to wed a younger and fairer woman than you!"

"It is false, child, false!" almost screamed the woman.

"It is true, mother!" said the other. "His aim now is to extirpate this American squadron—that done, he will wed Maraquita de Regla, if he can. Her father's consent is gained, hers is not wanted by so bold and lawless a man as Colcefrinas! You know that!"

"Child, have you been dreaming, or do you try to mock me?"

"Neither, my mother! I speak the truth. And harder has it stricken to my heart than it will to thine, for though he never has guessed a secret only ours, I have been so blind, so weak, so criminal, as to love this man, whom I call master and you call husband—though he is not!"

"Love him—you?"

"Yes, mother—yes! I dare to confess it: and now that I know him false to you, I feel as if he were false to me. I love him not now—I detest him, and only joy that he is in our power, if he escapes the Americans!"

"In our power?" said the mother, strangely quiet for one of her warm blood.

"Yes, mother! We have his treasures under our control. We have the power to betray him, and to punish him for his perfidy!"

"Yet we will not do it, child! Were he a thousand times false to me, though never again should he press his lip to mine, I would not betray him!" said Monona.

"Very well, mother, mine—very well! You may tamely bear your wrongs, if you will, but I—"

The heavy and sudden report of a gun outside the coast-line, caused the speaker to stop ere the sentence commenced was finished.

"What was that?" asked Monona, starting at the sound.

"A cannon from seaward! And there goes another, and another. They seem to be in the direction of the 'Two Sisters,' *Las Dos Hermanas*!" said Mariano. "Perhaps Lieutenant Allen has found work for his Alligator in strange waters. But the guns all seem to come from one source. There is no sound like the heavy metal in our vessel!"

"That is so—we must send out a boat to see what is going on!"

"It is night, mother, and a boat will not learn much in the dark!"

"True, child. But I cannot bear suspense. A boat may learn something, and one shall be sent. Have Solano called hither!"

"As you wish, mother—as you wish—yet 'twill be useless!"

CHAPTER XV.

After the storm had passed away, and the wind sighed itself down into a scarcely respectable breeze, the Alligator was once more headed toward the Cuban shore, under easy sail, according to the directions of Quiestra, to whose pilotage Allen now confided her, for the apparent eagerness of the Spaniard to take her in where the pirates could be found, and in the night when they would be taken at a disadvantage, led him more and more into the belief that the man was truly his friend, and would work for his interest.

The breeze was quite light, and growing more and more faint, when shortly before midnight, the look-outs forward cried out, "Sail ho!"

"Where away?" asked the officer of the deck, startled from a dreamy position on the weather quarter rail.

"Right ahead! Two vessels under a full spread of canvass, sir!"

"The watch to quarters! Rouse all hands from below! Call the captain!" said the officer, hurriedly.

"You take too much trouble, sir!" said Quiestra. "What do you wish to do?"

"To bring those vessels to, and take them, if they are pirates!" said the officer, pointing to two white objects, a mile or so ahead, and seeming like two vessels becalmed together, under canvass.

"They'll wait where they are till you have a chance to inspect them!" said Quiestra, with a quiet smile; and he went forward to evade further questioning.

"Stand by your two forward guns!" cried the officer at this moment, and as he gave the order, Allen came on deck.

"What is the matter?" asked the young commander.

"Two vessels in sight, sir, nearly ahead!"

"Which way are they standing?"

"They seem to be becalmed, sir—they do not alter their bearings!"

"Are they within reach of our iron?"

"I was about to order a trial, sir, when you came on deck!"

"Go on with it. Let us know who and what they are!"

"Fire as soon as you can throw a shot a half cable's length to windward of the strange sail!" cried the officer.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the gunners from forward. And in a very few moments a bright flash from one gun, and its thundering report, and that followed by another, shook the little vessel from stem to stern.

The hissing iron evidently struck the water near the destined spot, but no reply came from the strange vessels—not a sound of any kind.

"Are they in range of our broadside, sir?" asked Allen, annoyed that the strangers did not return his fire.

"I think they are, sir!" replied the officer of the deck.

"Then let them have a few shots as the

guns bear on them, but keep as near our course as you can!"

The officer gave the required orders, and for a half hour or more, while creeping on with the light breeze toward the stranger vessels, the schooner's guns sent shot after shot toward them.

"Have you an overplus of powder and shot on board, sir?" asked Quiestra, quietly of Allen, after the firing had been continued for some time.

"No, sir, not more than we shall need on our cruise—but why do you ask?"

"Because if you have not an overplus, target-shooting at a couple of white cliffs, or islands, marked as *Las Dos Hermanas*, or the 'Two Sisters,' on your chart, will not pay!" said Quiestra, quietly.

"Rocks? Islands? Are not those vessels at which we are firing?"

"No, sir—not without they are on dry land! Spare your powder, you will need it by-and-by!"

Allen, mortified at his error, gave the order to cease firing, and as the wind had died entirely away, and the current was drifting him toward shoal ground, he took Quiestra's advice, and ordered the sails taken in, and dropped his anchor.

This done, he bade the officer of the deck to keep a good look-out, with one watch of the crew on deck under arms, and then retired to rest, for he looked and hoped for work on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVI.

The other American vessels followed Allen to sea on the day after he sailed, having hurriedly taken in water and provisions. They had scarcely been lost sight of, before a Spanish merchantman came in, having on board Charley Howard, and the crew of the Pilot, whom they had picked up, fortunately. The American commander hurried to his consul to state the occurrences which had deprived him of his vessel; and by the advice of the latter, who accompanied him, he at once proceeded to inform the Intendente-General of the same.

The marquis did not seem at all startled by the news, for news it was not to him. He knew it already. He merely replied:

"There is a squadron on the coast, of your own countrymen, and they may recover your vessel!"

"So I hear, and I'm off to help them, if your excellency will only let me have one of your small guarda costas, and some arms. My crew will be but too glad to measure strength with the bloody pirates on fair chances!"

"I have no vessel which I can spare," replied the marquis to Howard, coldly.

"Then let me have some arms. I will fit up my long-boat—she can run down the coast!" urged the young American.

"Armed boats without a license are not allowed on our coast!" said the marquis, evasively.

"Allowed or not, there are plenty of them, as our suffering merchantmen know!" said the consul, in a sarcastic tone.

"Not when or where it is in our power to prevent it!" replied the marquis, haughtily.

"Captain, I am sorry for your misfortunes, but as you are in the hands of your own consul, any offers of aid on my part will only be taking from him his prerogatives! Adieu—I am very much engaged this afternoon."

This was said in a tone which implied their dismissal. Howard went away angry at this discourtesy, but the consul had become so used to such treatment, from the same source, that he paid but little attention to it.

"Have you not weapons to arm myself and boat's crew?" asked the seaman of the consul.

"I regret to say that I have not!"

"You can at least tell me where they can be bought!"

"They cannot be had in this place without a written permit from the alcalde. Such is the rule all over this tyrant-riden isle!"

"If you are as bold and fearless as you look to be and will take me for a volunteer, I will show you how to get, not only weapons, but a swift-sailing vessel!" said a clear and musical voice close behind them.

Both Howard and the consul turned suddenly to see where and who the speaker was, who evidently had been following them, and had overheard their conversation, or he would not have known their wants.

He was a young and slender boy—evidently not more than seventeen or eighteen, with a

very dark complexion, and a brow almost hidden under a heavy mass of black hair. His dress was like that of the better class of servants in gentlemen's houses in that country, where but few white servants are seen.

"How do you know that I want a vessel and arms?" asked Howard, sternly. "And why are you dogging our footsteps?"

"Because I happen to be in a position where, unseen, I witnessed your interview with the alcalde—heard your story and demands, and his refusal. I follow you to serve you, for I can do it. I also wish to go down the coast with you, to give Lieutenant Allen some very important information, which will enable him to capture the chief of the piratical horde whom he is after!"

"What, Colcefrinas?" exclaimed Howard.

"Yes, sir!" said the youth, frankly.

"Then I'm with you, young man, if you lead to the devil's own den!"

"Who are you? Your face is not familiar to me, and yet it seems as if I had seen you before!" said the consul.

"It matters not who I am, Señor Consul!" said the youth. "I know you very well, and I am a friend to the North Americans!"

"Where is the vessel you intend me to take, and where can we get arms?" asked Howard.

"I shall with your aid borrow the alcalde's private yacht. It is American built, and fast, and he always keeps plenty of arms on board. It is never fully manned, except when he goes on a pleasure-trip, and is moored off the palace-garden. We can get her away at night, if we are careful and you are skillful, and be at sea long before she is missed!"

"You're a trump, and I'm the man to play the game out with your help!" said Howard, gayly. "When and where will you meet me and my crew to put our plan in operation?"

"At the consul's house, as soon as it is dark!" said the young man; and turning on his heel, he went back the way that he had come.

"Well, fortune seems on the change for me!" said Howard, in a better humor than when the alcalde dismissed them.

"Yes, if this young man speaks the truth. I am trying to think when and where I have seen him before, for I am sure I have met him somewhere!" replied the consul, as they walked on toward his office.

CHAPTER XVII.

When the morning dawned once more on the Alligator, Allen was called, as he had directed. When he came on deck, the land-breeze was blowing gently, bringing off the delicious perfumes of that flowery clime. But in vain did he and the watch look for the vessels which they had seen the night before. Not a sign of them, or of anything human, could be seen. The small islands which dotted the water as far to the eastward as the eye could reach, were covered with a tall growth of mangrove, and other woods, and among these, in channels well known to them, but not laid down at that day in any chart, they had undoubtedly found refuge.

"This Colcefrinas was very bold on paper. I do not see why he should avoid me now, that I am here!" muttered Allen, in a tone of disappointment, while he lowered the glass which he had held to his eye for some time.

"Perhaps he wants to draw you into some position whence your retreat will be a matter of difficulty, if not an impossibility!" said a quiet voice, at his elbow.

The young lieutenant's face flushed, as he recognized the speaker, and he said:

"I would have the Señor Quiestra to understand that I shall never retreat. There is not an officer or man of all my crew who would not scorn to turn his back on a bloody pirate, and who would not die at his post, rather than do so. But the vessels which we saw last night cannot be far away. There has been but little wind all night, and even with sweeps they could have gone no great distance. They must be somewhere among these islands, and I shall man my boats and try to hunt them up!"

The Spaniard smiled, but made no answer. At the same moment, the eye of the young American brightened, for white and clear a column of smoke rose from an island, not a league distant.

"Man the first, second, and third cutters!" cried Allen, instantly. "Let every man go fully armed, and put spare ammunition in the boats. Be in a hurry!"

While he yet was speaking, another, and then another column of smoke rose from other

islands, until at least twenty of them could be seen.

"I thought, sir, that you said these islands were uninhabited!" cried Allen, turning to Quiestra.

"I repeat it, that they are not. Colcefrinas is amusing himself at your expense. He intends to learn you the game of hide and seek, I presume. I will wager that you will pull from island to island, all day, and yet not see a living man on any of them!"

"Yet men have lighted those fires!"

"Yes—men or women! But it is not likely they'll care to remain near them on so warm a day as this!"

"I'll soon see!" said Allen, and he ordered every boat on board to be got ready for service, and prepared to go himself in his gig.

"Are you not going to join our boat expedition, señor?" asked he of Quiestra.

"If I thought you'd catch Colcefrinas, I would!" said the Spaniard. "But feeling sure that you will not, I think I shall be more comfortable with my cigar, under your awning, than I should be sweltering in a boat, and fighting musquitos among the islands!"

"As you like, sir—as you like!" said Allen, secretly thinking that, despite his fierce looks, the señor was not much of a fighting-man after all.

In less than a half-hour, Allen, with more than four fifths of his men in every boat belonging to the vessel, was pulling away toward the island. And Quiestra smiled grimly as he saw them depart, for well he knew how fruitless would be their toilsome search.

Every officer had been a volunteer on this occasion; and all were allowed to go but the plethoric and rather apoplectic-looking doctor, who, under orders, was quite willing to remain upon the vessel, beneath a cool awning, where he could indulge in his favorite drink, cold brandy punch, to his heart's content. For he had laid in a good quantity of lemons, brandy, and sugar, and the vessel was well provided with water-coolers—that most necessary article in such a climate.

The orders of Allen to the doctor, when he left, were to keep the few men he left him on the alert, and to fire a gun if any sails were in sight. He was to remain on deck, and also to keep a look-out aloft.

"And am I to be cap'n?" asked the doctor, of Allen.

"You are to act as such in my absence. Remember that every gun is loaded; and if you should be attacked, defend yourself to the last, and blow up the magazine before you suffer yourself to be taken. If you don't, I'll blow you up if we ever meet on earth, or even in a hotter place!"

"How long d'ye mane to be gone, cap'n dear?" asked O'Shaughnessy.

"I know not. Not long, I hope; for I expect soon to find these audacious villains, and mean to make short work with them!"

A sardonic sneer flitted over the face of Quiestra, but it was not noticed, for his head was turned in another direction. And in five minutes more, Allen and all the boats' crews were gone, and soon lost to sight among the islands.

"There goes as good a heart as ever bated beneath a blue coat!" said O'Shaughnessy, as he gazed after his departing leader. "I hope the day is a long way off that calls him out o' the world. Let's drink his health, señor!"

"With pleasure, but you must drink it in some choice old liquor that I brought on board with my stores. It is Castilian brandy, bottled forty years ago!"

"Oh! bedad, it's nice—it must be. I'll drink the cap'n's health a dozen times in good liquor!"

Quiestra smiled, and invited the doctor to the state-room which had been assigned to him, and there opened his liquor-case. The doctor was delighted beyond measure with the flavor of the liquor, and required but little urging to repeat his potations. And they soon so opened the sluices of his generous nature, that he made not the slightest objection when Quiestra made the proposition to take a couple of bottles up and treat the few men on deck, although it was strictly against the rules of the vessel to give them a drop beyond their regular allowance of ship's liquor.

The men did not refuse—alas! sailors seldom do, though rum is their deadliest foe; and the brandy was eagerly drunk by them, tasting, as it did, better than the common but pure whisky which was supplied as their ration.

But the liquor produced an unexpected effect on all hands. Not twenty minutes had

elapsed before every man on board, Quiestra excepted, had sunk into a profound stupor. He had, of course, not partaken of the drugged liquor, though he had pretended to do so.

The moment that he was satisfied that every man was powerless under its effects, the bold villain went to the quarter of the vessel nearest to the land, and waved a crimson handkerchief toward the shore.

A moment only elapsed before three large boats with heavy crews were seen pushing from amid the thick bushes, and they were soon alongside.

"Spring aboard quick, my men, and do my bidding!" cried the pirate, as the boats came on. "Let every gun be spiked. Empty the magazine of powder, and carry it to our nearest hiding-place. Take all the small arms. That done, I will set the vessel aleak, and give her crew some pumping to do when they get back!"

The pirates were strong-handed, and the orders of their leader were soon obeyed.

"Rip their sails into ribbons on the spars; but don't cut a gasket so as to let them fall!" was his next order.

This done, another thought occurred to him.

"I see that feather pillows and beds are plenty in the cabin, and there is tar forward, in the rigging-room. The Yankee captain left his vessel in charge of men when he went away. Let him find them transformed into geese on his return!"

The pirates caught the idea of their leader in an instant, and, with great glee, set to carrying it out. The helpless doctor and the crew were dragged to the quarter-deck, stripped of their clothing, and then tar, followed by feathers, was so quickly applied to their nude forms, that they soon lost all resemblance to anything human. In truth, neither in the feathered kingdom nor elsewhere could anything like them have been produced. No one who has not seen a person tarred and feathered can for a moment imagine the utterly ludicrous appearance which a human being makes in that condition.

The pirates having finished their work, now bound each man side by side, in a sitting posture on the deck, and placed the doctor before them, with Allen's full dress cocked-hat on his head, and a plate, and knife and fork before him.

Upon this the pirate chief placed a slip of paper, on which he had written:

"These are the geese of Colcefrinas. When pickled, they will be ready for the spit!"

He had just done this, when one of his men, looking to seaward, cried out: "A sail in sight!"

Colcefrinas instantly seized his glass, and sprang into the rigging.

"It is strange," he muttered, as he saw a small vessel doubling a point of land, and heading in toward him. "That surely is the yacht of the Marquis de Regla; but what should it be doing in these waters at this time? There may be treachery in this!"

He descended to the deck, and instantly bade three or four of his men to go in the cabin, and put on the uniforms of the American officers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In a very short time, the men whom he had selected, because they spoke English fluently, were dressed in the uniforms of the American officers; and many more of his men he caused to dress in the cast-off garments of the tarred and feathered seamen. Then Colcefrinas glanced at the American flag yet flying at the flag-staff of the schooner aft, and cautioning his other men to crouch low behind the bulwarks of the vessel, again took his glass, and closely reconnoitred the approaching yacht.

A grim smile made its appearance as he recognized his late acquaintance, Captain Howard, of the Pilot, on board.

"So soon again in my net, young bird!" he muttered. "You'll not escape so easily this time. Let me see; he has twelve on board, besides himself—yes, thirteen; a dark-haired stripling of a boy stands beside him. If I can only coax them alongside, their capture will be bloodless and easy!"

He now gave some directions to one of his uniformed men, and rather concealed his own figure, by standing back of the mainmast, so that he could not be seen by those on board of the schooner, which now was near, if any there were using the spy-glass.

In a very short time, the yacht came within

hail; but Howard was too impetuous to wait for a hail from the schooner.

"Alligator ahoy!" he shouted. "Is Captain Allen on board?"

"No; he has gone ashore in his boat, but will be off soon!" replied one of the uniformed pirates, obeying the low-toned directions of his chief. "What vessel is that? and where are you bound?"

"A private craft, with important news for you. I'll run alongside—the yacht is small, and can be dropped astern like a long-boat!" replied Howard, carelessly, without suspecting for an instant that he was addressing any one but an American naval officer.

"Stand ready to make her fast the moment she touches our side, and board, and take her without firing a shot!" said Colcefrinas, in a low tone, while his dark eyes flashed, and his face flushed with exultation.

A moment later, and the yacht, rounding to in the wind, lowered her sails, while they shook, and shot alongside, steered by the skillful hand of young Howard. But scarcely had she touched the schooner's side, when Colcefrinas, with at least twenty or thirty of his desperadoes, leaped upon her deck, and, quicker than we can describe it, every American was a helpless prisoner.

The young man who had assisted Howard to get the yacht, turned as if to fly; but as the hand of Colcefrinas touched his arm, he uttered a low scream, and fainted.

"Ho! A pretty masquerade for the daughter of the Marquis de Regla!" he muttered, as at a glance he recognized Maraquita through her disguise. Then, as he raised her with one arm, he turned to Howard, who was already bound, and in the hands of a couple of his men, and said: "You have made good use of the life and time I gave you, señor captain!"

Howard, to whom this sudden turn of the tables was a perfect mystery, made no reply; he was too mad with himself, as well as his captors, to speak.

"Get ready for the shore now, my lads; we are off for the rendezvous!" cried Colcefrinas to his crew. "Make tow-lines fast to the yacht: she belongs to a friend of mine, and I will tow her in!"

"You'd better wait awhile; there are three American men-o'-war but a little way up the coast, coming down to pay their respects to you!" said Howard, tauntingly.

"Thank you for the news. I'll honor their desire when the inclination suits me!" said Colcefrinas, haughtily. And he bore his still insensible burden, poor Maraquita, into the cabin, while his followers were preparing to tow the yacht away.

Seeing writing materials on the table, he wrote a line to Allen, saying:

"Colcefrinas, disliking to see a Cuban taking part against a Cuban, has borrowed the Señor Quiestra, and, also, another and much dearer friend of the gallant lieutenant's, whom he promises to take special care of, as she seems rather careless of herself! And Colcefrinas would recommend his American friend to study the character of Job, while he continues to search for those who will ever be near him, though invisible!"

Hauling the American flag down, and then re-hoisting it half-mast, union down, with this note fastened to it, he sprang back into the yacht, which was cast off and taken in tow by the piratical boats; and in a few moments they all disappeared behind the islands which lay between the open sea and the main land. And, glancing back, Colcefrinas saw, just as the yacht was disappearing, the head-sails of one of the American vessels coming down the coast.

"Just in time to avoid trouble!" he muttered; and then he hurried into the cabin, to see how the Señorita de Regla fared; for he had given directions for one of his men to use restoratives while his own time was occupied.

He found her not only recovered from her swoon, but her weakness and terror had passed away, and indignation and anger had taken its place. Her dark eyes flashed as she scornfully said:

"I find the so-called Señor Quiestra occupied in his true occupation, at last!"

"You do, fair lady; and having taken so much pains to learn it, shall have plenty of time and opportunity to make further observations in that way!" said the pirate, with a sarcastic smile.

"You dare not detain me from my father!" said the spirited girl.

"I, Colcefrinas, dare do anything—everything!"

"You need not have named yourself. I knew you already, and came to warn the American commander, so that he might take and hang you, as you deserve!"

"You were very considerate, my beauty! In return, I shall let you hang yourself about my neck with your pretty arms whenever you choose!"

"I would sooner embrace a corpse!"

"I may give you a chance to do so, when I have played with your Yankee lover long enough, and choose to put an end to his dreams of love and fame!"

"Then he is not in your power?" exclaimed Maraquita, who, until that moment, had dreaded the worst from finding the pirate in possession of the American schooner.

"No; I permitted him to go off on a false scent, while I played him a trick. He is a Yankee; but if he can outwit Colcefrinas, he is welcome to my head!"

"He will have it before another moon follows this. I fear not for myself, if he is free; but you may tremble!"

"Neither fainting nor trembling are in my line!" replied the pirate, with a sneer.

"You will not again observe weakness on my part!" said Maraquita, proudly. "Though I am a woman, and in a villain's power, I have a Castilian heart, which knows no fear. I shall be reasoned, and you will die! I feel it—I see it!"

And so solemnly did she speak these last words so prophetic-like was her tone, that the pirate, for an instant, seemed affected. But like a shadow on the waters cast by a fleeting cloud, the emotion passed, and he said, with a sneer:

"The bridal bed is nearer to both of us than the grave, my fair girl. I shall undoubtedly restore you to your father again, but not until you are my wife. That matter was settled between him and myself long ago!"

Maraquita was about to make some bitter reply, when the head officer of Colcefrinas entered the cabin, and said:

"We are off the entrance, señor! Shall we run in?"

"Yes; if the sentinels do not signify that we are watched! I will join you on deck in a moment. Send a couple of trusty men down here, as sentinels, and see that all the prisoners are confined below. Their eyes must not behold our secret!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Severe as Garcia de Regla seemed to be toward his child, he yet loved her, and though he had bidden her confine herself to her room, and sent her from his presence in anger, it was not long before he began to miss her company, and to more than half regret the harshness of the words which he had used toward her. And very shortly after he had dismissed the consul and Captain Howard, he sent a servant to bid her come to him. The servant soon returned, saying that the door of her apartment was closed, and that he could not even get a reply from her when he announced himself as a messenger from her father.

"The girl is sulky. I will go to her myself in a little while," muttered the marquis, as he dismissed the servant.

For a while, he paced to and fro in the room, thinking aloud—a custom not unusual with him.

"Colcefrinas is almost too merciful for one so daring and lawless in his deeds!" he said. "Were any of those whom he has spared to meet and recognize him here, it would place me in a most perilous position. I wish that our compact, profitable as it is, were at an end, or that he would withdraw from the coast of this island!"

The reverie and soliloquy of the marquis were at this moment interrupted by the entrance of the elderly female attendant specially appointed to act as a *duenna* to his daughter.

"Pardon, señor—pardon me!" cried the old woman, as she cast herself upon her knees, at his feet.

"For what?" he cried, in astonishment. "Diobelo, what is the matter?"

"My young mistress, the señorita!" she gasped.

"What of her, woman—what of her? Is she dead? Has she eopen? Speak, before I murder you!"

"Alas, señor! I know not. Some time ago she came to her room weeping, and bade me go out, for she wished to be alone! I dared not disobey her; but I did not go far—only into the room of the major domo, and there I tarried a little while, when I thought I'd go

and see if my mistress did not want me. As I approached her room, I met a bold and handsome-looking young man, who had evidently just come out of it; but he went by me so fast, I could only get a glimpse of his features. I went to her door. It was locked. I knocked for admission; but she would neither let me in, nor even answer to my call. I waited and waited, hoping she would let me enter; but, alas, señor! she will not—and I have told you all!"

"Ay, and enough! You should have come to me instantly, when you saw that audacious gallant leave her room. Something vile and wrong is in all this; but I'll soon be at the bottom of it!" said the angry marquis. "Follow me!" And he strode away to the part of the palace where her chamber was located.

Loudly he knocked at her door with his hand. No answer came. Louder still he knocked with the golden hilt of his dress-sword. Still no reply.

"Maraquita!" he cried, "Speak! 'Tis your father that calls!"

Not a sound came in response, but the echo of his voice and blows.

"Call the armorer!" he said, huskily. "She may have been the victim of an assassin! Let the door be forced at once!"

The armorer, with assistants, was soon at hand, and the ponderous door yielded to their efforts. The marquis rushed in. There was no sign of his daughter in the first room, where she usually sat. Her harp and guitar lay where they usually did—nothing unusual seemed to have occurred there. The half-distracted father hurried into the inner chamber, and there saw, scattered in disorder, the garments which she had worn when last she left his presence. But several articles of male apparel, such as had been used in some masquerade in the palace, lay also on the floor, as if a selection had been made from amongst them.

The marquis hardly needed to read an open note which lay upon the dressing-table, to understand who it was that the half-blind *duenna* had met coming from the room of her young mistress. The note, however, was fully significant, and he paled as he read these words:

"When a father resorts to tyranny, and seeks to link his child to crime and dishonor, disobedience on her part becomes a virtue. I go to seek a protector, to save me from wrong and infamy. When I have found him, and am his wife, I will return."

"MARAQUITA DE REGLA."

"Ten thousand furies! She has gone, and in disguise. Let every servant of my house be sent in search of my child. I will give a hundred doubloons to him who finds her!"

The news spread through the palace in a few moments, and with the reward as an additional incentive to their duty, soon a hundred people were scouring through the city, in search of the fair fugitive.

Meantime, the marquis acted like one distracted. He went from room to room in the palace, and his curses were neither few nor far between, nor very gentle. Suddenly, soon after night set in, the old man who acted as captain of his small pleasure-yacht made his appearance.

"What want you here, Pedro?" cried the marquis, angrily. "I have bidden every one to go and search for my daughter."

"Your pardon, señor. But I came to tell you that *los malos Americanos* had stolen away the yacht, and put me and my boys on shore!"

"The Americans? What Americans?" thundered the marquis, fairly livid with rage.

"I know not, your excellency!" said the old man. "The first I knew, they were on board, and had me in their power. Their leader put me and my boys in a boat with a single paddle, after he had got nearly out of harbor, and told me to tell you that an American gentleman had borrowed your yacht for a time, and would return it when he was done with it!"

"A thousand curses on him, whoever he is. But his consul or his government shall pay for the outrage!" cried the marquis, almost choking with rage. "Go and join the search, old man. Go—I wish to be alone!"

CHAPTER XX.

An hour, not more, elapsed after Colcefrinas and his party had left with their prisoners, when Allen, with his boats, again came in sight of the schooner, he having in vain sought for a further sign of the pirates than that which had been made by their pillars of smoke. And, being in the lead of the column of boats,

he was the first to descrie the flag of his vessel at half-mast, as well as to see that three vessels were coming in from seaward. And he had cause to wonder why O'Shaughnessy had not obeyed his positive order, to fire a gun if any sail hove in view.

"Give way at your oars with a will, men!" he cried, impatiently. And then, in a lower voice, he added: "the devil must be on board the schooner, or else O'Shaughnessy is drunk. What on earth her colors can be at half-mast for while her hull is above water, is beyond my comprehension!"

The sharp-built gig of Allen flew through the water, for the crew saw in their leader's face his anxiety to be on board, and the other boats' crews strained every nerve to keep up, for they saw the sign of distress on board the schooner, and the approaching vessels outside and felt as if, at least, there was fun ahead; for there is no better fun for a true sailor than a good fight in a good cause. The sails coming in with a light breeze astern, were about equidistant from the schooner, and, showing American colors, came on rather faster than the boats, and were coming to an anchor, and clewing up their canvas, when Allen dashed alongside of his vessel.

He was the first to spring on board, sabre in hand, for he feared some dark treachery there, in that he was not hailed from the schooner, nor could a single living person be seen.

It is unnecessary for us to re-describe the appearance of the doctor and the crew, but as we left them in a former chapter, so Allen found them.

He was too angry to laugh—too much amazed to feel diverted; but as he seized the yet stupefied doctor by the shoulder and shook him, he asked, in his loudest, bitterest tone:

"What does this masquerade mean, sir? Speak! what does it mean?"

"Be jabers! cap'n, is it you that's a talkin', and who are you talkin' to, and where in the devil's unhowly name am I?" asked the doctor, looking with half-opened eyes on the feathery semi-circle before him, and vainly endeavoring to rise.

"How came you in this fix?" asked Allen, as with his knife he severed the doctor's bonds, while the boats' crews crowding aboard endeavored but in vain to stifle their laughter at the sight before them.

"The howly saints only know, and it's them you'll have to ask for information!" exclaimed the doctor, as he looked at his person from head to foot.

"Be the man that learned Moses his letthers, it's meself would like to know how these feathers grew to me!"

While the doctor was considering this most pertinent question, the men who had just come on board were releasing their comrades from their bonds. Allen, meanwhile, whose eye had caught a sight of the note beneath the flag, was perusing to him its inexplicable contents.

"Quiestra has been taken away, and Colcefrinas himself has been on board according to this note," he cried. "But who on earth can be the dearer friend whom he speaks of? By Heavens, there is a deep mystery in all this which I would fain unravel," he added, in a lower tone.

"Every gun is spiked, all of our small arms are gone, and the magazine has been emptied, sir," reported the first-lieutenant to Allen. "The whole vessel has been ransacked, and robbed of everything valuable."

"And she is leaking, sir; there are three feet of water in the hold," said the carpenter, who had just been sounding the pumps.

"The infernal wretch! Why did he not sink the vessel while she was in his power, instead of merely disabling?" muttered Allen, angrily. Then turning to the lieutenant, he bade him put one watch of the crew at the pumps—told the carpenter to seek out and try to stop the leaks, and then bade the other men help to free their unfortunate comrades from the disagreeable garments left on them by Colcefrinas.

The doctor had already disappeared in the direction of his state-room—whence his voice, heard in low and bitter oaths, and in calls upon his servant for sponge, brushes, spirits of turpentine, and brandy, gave token that he also was trying to renovate.

Allen had but just ordered the ensign to be hoisted up properly, when boats approached from his consort vessels with their respective commanders in them.

"What in Heaven's name is the matter here."

Allen?" asked the first officer who sprang on board.

"Nothing, but that I've been an egregious fool!" said Allen. "Nothing else in the world. I was led to take nearly all my crew away in boats to try and hunt out the pirates, who made signal-smokes on a dozen different islands; and while I was gone, my remaining crew were hocus-pocussed in some way—what way I have not yet found out, but soon will—and the pirates have been here and spiked my guns, robbed and scuttled the vessel."

"Pretty well done, but no blood spilled so far," said the other, with a smile. "Now that we are all together, perhaps we can turn the tables on these gentlemen, and show them a Yankee trick or two. Don't be disheartened, my dear Allen."

"I am not disheartened, Gregory," replied Allen; "but I am most profoundly mortified. But if you and the rest will do me one favor—mark, I ask where my rank permits me to demand—you will oblige me eternally."

"Name it—you know that I am in fraternal feeling bound to do all I can for you."

"Then rest easily right here until I run into port and refit. I can get all I need in Mantanzas from the arsenal there, and be back in four or five days all right below and aloft, and ready with you and the rest of 'the old mess' to carry the war with this Colcefrinas and his red-handed gang into every den and stronghold they may lurk in. I have been caught once, but do not mean to be again while life is left me—at least in these latitudes."

"I will do as you wish," said Gregory; "Kearney and Rammage will undoubtedly do the same."

"Yes; what is it?" said Kearney, who at that instant stepped on board, closely followed by his last-named colleague.

Allen's wishes were explained, and the three other officers willingly agreed to remain at an anchor until he could refit and return; at the same time receiving directions to send strong boat expeditions out to try and discover the depot or main rendezvous of the pirates, for that they had some place in which to store their plunder and refit their vessels, there was no doubt in the mind of.

By the time these matters had been arranged, Doctor O'Shaughnessy had become a little more fitted for decent society than he was when we last saw them, though his head still was feathery, and his red face looked the more fiery for its recent alcoholic scrubbing.

"I hope now, doctor, that you will be able to give me a clear and succinct account of all that has occurred within your remembrance, since I left the vessel," said Allen, as he sat down in the cabin with his visitors, when O'Shaughnessy came out of his state-room. "I hope that you will show that you have been rather the victim of misfortune than the dupe of your own carelessness or neglect."

"Faith, cap'n dear, it's a victim I've been that's as sure as that me mother Bridget was a lady, and I'll invite the gentlemen to a dose of powder and ball, whoever says to the contrary. But how I was victimized, it bothers the life o' me to imagine. Your friend, the Spanish señor, and meself took a glass of wine or two after you left, and that is all that I remember until you woke me from some sort of a wild drame I'd been havin', and I found myself feathered like a booby."

"Where did you get the wine you took?" asked Allen, as a strange suspicion flashed like a spark of electricity on his mind.

"The wine or brandy—for sure I forget which it was now—came from the private stores of the señor."

"And did the crew get their liquor from the same source?"

"I believe they did—in truth, they couldn't have got it anywhere else, for I had the keys of the store-rooms in my pocket," replied the doctor.

"By Heavens! I see through it all. What a blind fool I have been all this time!" muttered Allen. "This Quiestra is a confederate of the pirates; most likely a piratical leader himself, and under the disguise of friendship has been leading me astray, and is even now laughing at my folly. But if I ever set eyes on him again, he'll have something besides laughing to do. Gentlemen, you must excuse me, for I am in a hurry now to get to a port where I can refit and prepare for such a foray on these wretches as will, in some measure, retrieve my lost honor. I must be under way at once."

"We will have to beg or borrow another

suit of sails first, sir," said the first-lieutenant, who entered the cabin in time to hear Allen's last remark. "The scoundrels have ribboned every sail on the spars, though not loosened from the brails and gaskets."

"But we have another suit below."

"They are in even a worse condition, if such a thing can be possible! The wretches meant utterly to disable us."

"Well, thank fortune, it is not quite done. The leaks are stopped—are they not?"

"Yes, sir—and the sails can be mended. But it will take some time."

"Time which we cannot spare. Gregory, you can spare us your second suit of sails to make shift to get into port with, can you not?"

"Certainly," replied the officer addressed; "and anything else which you need that is in my possession."

It is not necessary that I should prolong this chapter by a description of how it was done, but in less than two hours the Alligator was under way and standing up the coast with a fresh breeze, while her consorts remained to await her return, and to watch for such signs of the pirates as might be seen.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was but two days later. The Marquis de Regla, yet disconsolate for the loss of his daughter, was pacing to and fro in his private chamber, only receiving reports from those who had thus far made vain search for the missing lady. His face betokened his deep grief; for, heartless as he might seem to all others, he almost idolized his child. He did so, even though he seemed cruel to her in his ambition to rise, by the gift of her hand to one whom he knew to be a lawless and desperate criminal: although, in those days, and even yet, piracy, and its fraternal hand-maid—nigger-catching on the coast—have not been deemed very criminal among the Spaniards.

The entrance of the Secretary of the Intendente, with a look which bespoke news, attracted the attention of the marquis, who hastily cried:

"Has she been heard from? Speak! for by your face I read that you have news of some kind for me. Be it good or bad, let me hear it; for no new ill can befall me! At least, none greater than that which I suffer now!"

"The American man-o'-war schooner, whose captain has had the audacity to pay such marked attention to your lovely daughter, has just entered the harbor, and anchored. The captain desires an interview with your excellency!"

"Admit him at once; he may—nay, he must know of her absence. The note she left plainly intimated that she intended to seek his protection!"

The secretary withdrew, and in a few moments Allen entered the room.

"Well, sir, where is my daughter?" asked the marquis, sternly, before Allen had even time to salute him as common courtesy would dictate.

"I do not understand your excellency!" said Allen, hastily. And then, while an expression of painful alarm gathered on his face, he added: "Is she missing?"

"Yes; and I have every reason to believe she has gone to seek you, who so vilely have stolen her affections from me!"

"Marquis de Regla, this is strange language for you to use, who so lately permitted me the utmost freedom of access to her. But your feelings at her loss—if indeed she be lost—are a sufficient excuse with me!"

"If indeed she be lost?" said the marquis. Do you doubt my word? Do I look like one who had passed sleepless days and nights in grief, or not? She is lost—has fled from my roof, and gone Heaven knows where only, if you do not know!"

"I do not!" said Allen; and then, suddenly, the remembrance of the note left by Colcefrinas came to his mind. "Did I understand your excellency to say that you believed she had gone to seek me?" he asked.

"So a note left by her intimated!"

"How could she have reached me? Has any vessel sailed hence bound down the coast, except my American consorts?"

"I know not. My yacht is missing, and has been stolen, I suspect, by an American captain and his crew—one Howard, whose vessel was lately taken by the pirates, and who wished to join you!"

"Merciful Heaven! I believe I can see through all now. If she reached my vessel in

my absence, she is in the power of that vile wretch—Colcefrinas! Now I can understand the meaning of the note he left on board my vessel after he had disabled my crew, by the aid of his confederate—Quiestra!"

"You really think, then, that she is in the hands of Colcefrinas?" asked the Intendente, while his face wore an easier expression.

"If she reached my vessel, I know that she is!" said Allen.

"Thank Heaven that it is no worse, then!" said the marquis, with a quite contented air.

"No worse!" exclaimed Allen, in a tone of surprise, and with a look of horror. "Can aught worse on earth befall a maiden than to be in the hands of a merciless, lawless, licentious pirate? What am I to understand by your expression?"

"That she is where she can be ransomed; and where they dare not, for their own sakes, harm her!" said the marquis, who saw that he had gone too far—far enough perhaps, to arouse suspicions of his own connection with the lawless bands of marauders whom Allen and his comrades had been sent to exterminate.

"She shall be rescued if life is left me!" said Allen. "But for the cowardly conduct of Colcefrinas—who, by a ruse, led me away from my vessel, I had met, and saved her. And your friend, Quiestra, was the traitor who aided the pirate-chief in his plans!"

"Who dares to call Quiestra a traitor?" cried a well-known voice at the door; and the next instant the pirate-chief stood before them in his former plain citizen's dress, without a visible weapon upon him.

"I do, dog of a pirate—I do!" thundered Allen; and he drew his sword ere the words had passed his lips.

"Captain Allen is very courteous to his late guest; and very brave to draw his sword upon an unarmed man!" said the other, with a bitter sneer. And he drew his tall form to its fullest height, and folded his arms haughtily across his broad chest.

"You can easily provide yourself with a weapon, if you have the courage to use one!" said Allen, bitterly. "From you I will learn where the Señorita de Regla is, or—"

"Or what?" said the Spaniard, in his cold, sneering way, seeing that Allen hesitated.

"Cut your black, cowardly heart out!" cried Allen, almost beside himself with rage.

"Then, as the alternative is rather a severe one, perhaps you had better be accommodated. The señorita is safe within the quarters of the gallant Colcefrinas, who has permitted me to be his bearer of dispatches as the price of my freedom. Here is a letter to his Excellency, the Marquis de Regla—touching her ransom, probably; and one from Colcefrinas to yourself, which I doubt not will please one of such a combative disposition as is Lieutenant Allen."

And the Spaniard, bowing low and mockingly, handed Allen his letter, while, more politely, he tendered the other to the marquis. The first was received with a frown, the other with a smile. But, angry as he was, Allen sheathed his sword, and read his letter. It was a proposal, written actually in a tone of chivalry, to meet the chieftain, Colcefrinas, on blue water, and at fair terms—"for," said the latter, "I have now got the schooner, Pilot, which I have re-christened 'The Marquita,' in honor of my fair guest, the daughter of the Marquis de Regla; and having borrowed sufficient arms and munitions from the Alligator to fit her up for action, have no doubt but that I can give Lieutenant Allen a day's pastime whenever he desires it!"

"By the flag of my native land, this insulting boaster shall be tested, and if he dares to meet me on blue water, we will see which is the better man!" muttered Allen, as he closed the letter.

"He dares, and will, and but waits for you to name the time and place, proud Yankee!" said Quiestra. "But, mark you, he bade me tell you that you bring no other vessels with you. If you do, he remembers that the Pilot can outsail even your clipper craft, and will bide by that advantage!"

"He need not fear that I will ask other aid than my own brave crew. I have right on my side, and he has the wrong to weaken him. I fear him not, and will meet him the instant I can refit; which, by proper aid here, I can do in a few days. If I cannot get what I need here, I must sail to Charleston, or some other southern port of the United States! But I hope that his excellency will not refuse, on the part of his government, what would never be

refused in our land, to a vessel of his nation, nor hesitate to aid me in refitting!"

"Of course not!" said the marquis, with his eyes still upon the letter which he had reading, and a covert smile upon his face.

"And I will endeavor to ransom your daughter with my sword; while my government will not only acknowledge your courtesy, but restore each article for which I may make requisition!"

"Then, when and where shall I tell Colcefrinas that you will meet him?" asked Quicestra, quietly.

"Let him name the place—not more than two days' sail from here. My time will be but one week, if I have to work my crew night and day to be ready!"

"I will get it from him in writing and do not fear but that he will be there; for he hates you with the same intensity that he loves the Señorita Maraquita!"

"He dare to love her?" cried Allen, angrily.

"He dares anything, even to flinging his hate and defiance in your own face! Yankee, I am Colcefrinas; beware when next we meet!"

Before Allen, who was almost stupefied by this sudden surprise, could reply, or even stoop to pick up the glove which the pirate had cast contemptuously in his face, the latter had turned upon his heel and left the room.

The marquis, with well dissembled surprise, cried out: "This is most extraordinary! Why the Señor Quicestra should pretend to be what he is not, is more than I can understand!"

"I believe that his pretence ended when he declared himself to be Colcefrinas; and if others would be as plain as he has been at last, I should know better with whom I am dealing, and how to deal with them!"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked the marquis, while a flush, either of anger or shame, suffused his countenance.

"That the man in high office who can be a friend to this pirate-chief, is false to his duty and to himself!"

"Dare you insinuate that I, sir, knowingly, have ought to do with pirates?"

"Like Colcefrinas, I dare almost anything! Impudence is an infectious disease, I believe!"

"Sir! I but a moment ago offered you every aid to fit out your vessel to battle with the pirates!"

"I know you did, sir; and now, you dare not withdraw your offer! If you did, I would report you to your own government, as well as to mine!"

"For Heaven's sake, do not that!" said the marquis, turning pale with apprehension.

"Fit out my vessel speedily, and I will not," said Allen, sternly. "For the sake of your lovely and angelic daughter, I would rather have found you an honest man, than to see you the possessor of all the wealth ever owned by Croesus!"

The marquis now really blushed, for he felt that the plain republican before him held him in utter contempt; and well he knew that he deserved it.

"I will go on board my vessel, and make out a requisition for all that I need, and draw a bill on my government for the same. All I ask of you is, that the articles are promptly furnished, and of a good quality—no more!"

As he said this, Allen turned upon his heel, and without a bow or a word of adieu, left the room.

"This is terrible!" muttered the marquis, when he found himself alone. "Colcefrinas is foolishly rash, and will be my ruin, without he conquers this detested American, and sinks him and his secrets to the bottom of the sea!"

"That he will do, if you but do your part!" said the pirate-chief, entering by a different door from that which Allen had departed.

"Let the specimens of powder you send be good; but let the bulk be that condemned trash which I let you have! And so with all else that you furnish, only be sufficiently careful in concealing the fraud. He shall never return to reproach you for your conduct!"

"I live again in hope!" said the marquis. "But why the deuce did you make yourself known to him?"

"Because I was maddened with his taunts, and tired of tampering with him. He is the boldest of all who have been sent against me, and must be the first to go down. After that, I can dispose of the rest easily. But I have no time to tarry. I must back to my men, who rage like hungry lions to be at the foe, who now blockade the coast, and cut our usual cruises short!"

"Hold, for one moment!" cried the mar-

quis. "My daughter—where did you find her?"

"On board of your yacht, in male disguise. She came with the mad-cap American, Howard, who is a second time my prisoner; and her intention was to betray me to Allen, for so she now boasts. How she knew my real name and business, you can tell, perhaps—I cannot!"

"Or my honor, I know not!" said the marquis. "But yet another question. When will you return her to me?"

"When she is my bride, and our compact fulfilled. Not before!" said Colcefrinas; and then he turned away, and left the room by the door where he had entered.

"Would to Heaven there had never been a compact between us; nor I had linked myself to him in the fearful bonds of crime!" said the marquis, as he slowly followed the other from the room.

And scarcely had he left, when out from behind a curtain stepped yet another of our characters. It was Mariano, the faithful (?) page of Colcefrinas—the child of his confiding mistress. The dark eyes of Mariano were bright with anger or some strong passion.

"So now I know who and what is the treasure so carefully guarded by my kind master in the caverns of El Sierra Diabolo. And he will return her to her father when she is his bride—not before? We'll see—we'll see! Poor Maraquita shall find one friend; and so should her lover, were he not a detested Yankee. It is better that he should perish, and I shall not interfere. But I must away, ere my master is looking for me."

And the youth hurried on, as we must do with our story, for much remains of it to be told: some that is beautiful, more that is dark and terrible, little that is not true—alas! too true.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was a gorgeous place, the great treasure-cavern of the pirate Colcefrinas, in the Sierras del Diabolo, the not inaptly-named "Mountains of the Devil." I mean within; for outwardly nothing but huge rocks, covered with tropical clinging-shrubs, among which lurked many a deadly reptile, could be seen, and none but the very few who composed his private guard knew of the secret to its entrance. And so wild were those hills, so terrible the passes to them, that even daring Rapacity, and almost equally venturesome Curiosity, never yet had ventured so far as the stronghold which I am about to describe—though, in later days, many a traveler thought that a trip to the now dismantled "Pirate Cave" an indispensable portion of his Cuban tour.

Entered by a passage almost hidden by rocks when one was within ten feet of it, and curtained with thorny vines and bushes, those who sought its inner mysteries would have to grope their way along a narrow winding hall for nearly or quite three hundred feet, where a light was never permitted to be used. For here was a vast safe-guard to the place, as could be felt by those who groped along, in two rows of barreled gunpowder, which were so connected with fuses, that a match applied from within would at once fire the entire terrible battery. Or, so at least all who entered there were told, and none who knew Colcefrinas for a moment doubted that he had the nerve to apply the match whenever, if ever, it became necessary for the destruction of others. At the end of this gallery there were three separate strong oaken doors, each barred and bolted on the inside, with a sentinel to each, who would unbar to none but those whom he knew had authority to demand entrance or exit. Here, dim lights for the first time showed the extent of the sentinels' promenade, and the strength of the securities.

The last portal passed, and an immense hall opened to view, where, encamped like soldiers at bivouac, the guard of the interior, as well as exterior—a fierce and hardy-looking set of men, yet not sunbrowned and bronzed by storm and tempest, as were their comrades, whose scene of action lay abroad. All around this huge cavern were boxes of goods, stores of provisions, arms, and munitions; and the greatest wonder to one would be, how they got there? It was lighted by hanging lamps of silver, such as are still to be seen in the old cathedrals and churches, from whence they had probably been taken; for pirates neither fear man nor God, and seldom indeed have been known to respect sanctuary.

But beyond this hall were rooms, into which none but the chief and two or three of his

servants and most faithful officers were ever permitted to penetrate; and from these often came rumors, that within all was splendor and magnificence, of a character almost too brilliant to describe. It was known that thither had been conveyed the almost countless treasures which, in many years of daring piracy, had been amassed; but many a secret yet lay within those inner doors, which none dare to whisper, and but few knew. Let us begin to overhaul some of them.

In an apartment, curtained with crimson velvet, which blazed with wreaths and flowers of jewels, and through which a soft, dreamy light was cast by several moonlike lamps, pendant from the lofty ceiling—a room furnished as a chamber and sitting-room, with every article which luxury could dictate, or the heart of an empress desire, stood a pale, tearful, but yet very lovely girl. She stood in an attitude, and with a look almost of utter despair. Wine, fruits, and other food stood untouched upon a table before her—she seemed not to look upon one of the thousand beautiful things about her, but to gaze abstractedly in the air, while her hands were clasped together, as if bound by the icy manacles of despair.

But at the sound of a coming footstep she aroused—aroused almost fiercely, brushed the tear-drops from her cheeks, and drew her form up haughtily; and turning toward the closed door, glanced with black, flashing eyes thitherward, as if she expected to meet, and—by her looks—would repel some hated enemy.

The door opened; and her fierce, determined look softened, as if the visitor who came was not the one whom she had expected.

That visitor was none other than the youth Mariano. And in his look there was such a mingled expression of kindness and pity, that it was no wonder the lady's fierce glance had so suddenly softened.

"You expected my master, lady," said the youth, as he bowed low and deferentially.

"I dreaded that it was he who approached!" replied the lady.

"Why does the señorita so dread him? Is he not handsome?" asked the youth, in an apparently careless manner.

"Is he not my captor and my jailer?" asked the fair girl; "has he not long been hated by me? This, as his confidential attendant, you have often had occasion to see, when, with him, you visited my father's house, and before I knew his dreadful calling and terrible name. Is it not so, good Mariano?"

The youth bowed his assent, and then asked:

"Why does the señorita call me good Mariano?"

"Because you speak kindly and gently to me—have ever done so; and it were very cruel, and, besides, unnatural, if I replied or acted other than kindly in return. You could do one act, Mariano, which would outmeasure a million words of kindness. You could; yet I dare not ask that which I know you would refuse!"

"Lady, I do not misunderstand you. You would ask me to aid you to regain your freedom!"

"I would, good Mariano; and so far as I could, would reward you."

"I ask no reward, lady; it was to give you hope of this I came now—but faint hope, alas! for you are guarded by those over whom I have no influence; and only cunning and the wit of—"

The youth paused and trembled; for other and heavier footsteps than his had been heard close at hand.

Placing his finger on his lips, as a sign of caution and secrecy, Mariano sprang behind the heavy curtains, which concealed an alcove, in which the lady's couch was placed; and though thus not left quite alone, Maraquita seemed so to be when the hated pirate chieftain entered the room.

He seemed surprised to see her so calm, so haughty, and, withal, so full of bloom—for that one ray of hope had left a flush of beauty on her cheek, brighter, it seemed to him, than he had ever before noted there. He had come expecting to find her drooping, wretched—a pleader at his feet. Now, almost queenly in her majestic beauty, she stood erect, and with a flashing eye, confronted him.

"Your beauty improves with your residence here, fair lady!" he said, as he paused midway of the room.

She made no reply; but gazed upon him with a steady but a scornful look.

"And your power of conversation seems to

have rather failed!" he added, sarcastically. "When I was last here, you tried threats, reproaches, pleadings, and even curses. I thought you grandly beautiful when, in your anger, you cursed me—none but a very pretty woman can curse, and lose nothing of her beauty in her wrath—but I have never seen you look quite so well as now!"

"Not even when, by your connivance and my father's consent, I leaned upon the arm of my heart's husband, the brave Allen, on my birth-night?" she asked, in a tone even more sarcastic than his own had been.

"Your heart's husband!" he cried, bitterly. "Your heart will soon be widowed, if he holds that relation to it! His doom is sealed; for within three days he will be in my power, and with his whole crew shall be sent to eternal perdition! If you doubt it, you shall see his head, and that shall grace our bridal feast!"

"Monster! I have known you to boast before. Heaven will protect him; and your guardian, who reigns below, will desert you!"

"Hardly! I have served him too long and well for that. But, no more of this nonsense. You, having found the use of your tongue, may belay its running-gear for a while, and open your ears. I have been to see your father."

"Does he know where I am?"

"He knows that you are my guest."

"And is he content with that knowledge?"

"Perfectly; but would like to see you as soon as convenient after you have become my wife. Why do you smile, fair lady so mockingly?"

"It amuses me to notice with what grace you can utter falsehoods."

"But, by Heaven! I utter the truth. You smile again!"

"Yes, to hear you swear by a place of which you know nothing now, and which will never know anything of you!"

"You seem determined to provoke me! It is rather a dangerous amusement, as you may find to your cost."

"Those who do not fear danger, never pause to count the cost."

"And so you do not fear me?"

"We are not apt to fear those whom we despise!"

"Girl, beware! Do not tempt my good-nature too far!"

"Your good-nature! Let the ape boast of its beauty—the serpent of its harmlessness, after this!"

"You will regret this, proud girl; but I will not war in words with you now. When next we meet, prepare for two pleasant surprises. I shall bring you two presents: one will be your wedding-ring—the other, the head of your heart's husband!"

With a frown darker yet than his threats, the pirate turned away, and strode heavily from the room.

After the sound of his footsteps had died away entirely, Mariano came out from his place of concealment.

"You bore yourself bravely, lady—almost too bravely, I fear; for he will suspect some hope has cheered your heart—some thought that you may yet escape," said he.

"No; he will, rather, think that my desperation has forced away from my heart all fear of him, and that I am provoking him to slay me!" said the lady. "But what did he mean by saying that he had Allen in his power—or would have, in three days?"

"That a challenge has passed between them to meet upon the ocean, vessel to vessel."

"Then I fear not the result. Allen will be the victor!"

"Were it not for treachery, lady, he might."

"For treachery? What do you mean?"

"That your own father, lady, who supplies Allen with his powder and arms, is to give him a worthless article; and thus the American will be in the power of Colcefrinas!"

"Great Heaven! Oh, do not say that my father will be guilty of such an act! It cannot—must not be!"

"Alas, lady, it doubtless has been done, and the gallant American is by this time at sea, proceeding to the spot where my master is to meet him."

"Oh, cruel, cruel butchery! This must not be. Mariano, he must be warned in some way. Can I not be set free—or, in some disguise, get on board the vessel of your master—so that, if I cannot save him whom I love, I can at least die with or near him!"

Mariano shook his head mournfully, as if to imply that it was impossible.

Tears started in those black eyes, which so lately had flashed back glance for glance with the haughty pirate.

"O Mariano, you have never loved!" said Maraquita, with a low sob of agony.

"Would to Heaven I never had—did not!" said Mariano; and never did a deeper blush suffuse the cheek of a timid girl, than for a moment reddened his.

A light step at the door—a low "hist"—was heard.

"I am called; your sentinel, who is my friend, has given me my warning!" said Mariano, hastily. "If I can see you or aid you again, I will."

He bowed his head, and kissed Maraquita's hand; then, in a moment, was gone.

When she raised her hand, and saw that he had left a tear-drop there, she wondered, but only said:

"It is a jewel. All that I have. A gem of pity. Heaven help him whom I love! Heaven help me!"

And again she paled, and drooped down as despairingly as we found her when we opened this chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Once more at the rendezvous. The harbor was full of small boats, and there were several more of the sloops and schooners in than were there when we first described the place. And by the number of men aboard and on shore, not less than a thousand, perchance one-half as many more, it was evident that the pirates had been driven in by the vigilance of the cruisers outside, and were collected either for some formidable foray, or else for the purpose of making a last and a desperate defence. The latter, indeed, seemed most probable, for all of the vessels, with one exception, were moored head and stern, in a manner to bring their broadsides to bear upon the hidden entrance to their harbor. The exception alluded to was the beautiful clipper which the pirate-chief had taken from Howard, and which so nearly matched the Alligator in build and equipment, when the latter was as she should be, ready for sea and for action.

Her sails were loose and ready for hoisting and sheeting home, her picked crew were all on board, her anchor was nearly apeak, and only was the daring leader of those daring men waited for on board before her wings would be spread to the land breeze, which was already blowing to waft her out to sea. The sun was setting, and though it was setting in a dark and heavy cloud-bank to westward, no one seemed to notice that. All eyes were turned upon the chief, who, dressed in a style of kingly magnificence calculated well to please his devoted but barbarous followers, had just left his house on shore, and walked through the masses of his men to the boat, which lay ready to carry him off to the vessel which bore his flag.

There was no sound of cheering, but many a bright blade waved in the air, many a low word of cheer fell on his ear. Doubtless, prudence had caused an order for this unusual silence; for with the breeze the sound of a thousand or more lusty voices would be borne almost as far as the booming of a gun.

Colcefrinas was soon upon his deck, the low word of command was given, the anchor ran up, and, as if by magic, every sail was hoisted and sheeted home at once; and gracefully the schooner veered away toward the narrow entrance, seeming to move over, rather than through the water. Ere the gray of twilight had darkened upon the bloom of sunset, the vessel had passed from view, and then the men who were left behind returned to their usual pastimes when at leisure—cards, dice, dominoes, and wine.

The moment that Colcefrinas had parted from Monona, his queenly mistress, at the rendezvous—the parting, too, had been strangely fond on his part, and apparently as fond on hers—she turned to Mariano, who had been left behind, for Colcefrinas took no supernumeraries on that trip, and quickly asked, while her swelling bosom, fierce eye, and flushed cheek told her passion, this question:

"Now tell me, child, and quickly, what has been his treachery to me, for traitor I know he has been and is, not from your hints alone, but from a fondness that must be simulated when it is so unusual—tell me, what has it been?"

"You know, my mother," replied the youth, "that when last he came in the night with

some American prisoners and hurried them away to the mountain, that he also told you that he had a treasure to add to his horde."

"Ay! I remember that!"

"The treasure was a woman whom he has sworn to make his bride."

"A woman!" gasped Monona.

"A woman, young and very fair—the daughter of the Intendente-General of Matanzas, whom for a year or more he has been trying to win willingly to his arms. In that he has failed, but she has fallen into his power."

"Does she hate him?" asked the mother, almost gaspingly.

"Yes, loathes and detests him, and does not fear even in her captivity to tell him so."

"That saves her life," said Monona, as she drew an easier breath. "Had it been other wise, I would have slain her with my own hand. But she must be freed from his power. The guards will release her at my command."

"They will deny that she is there, mother," replied Mariano. "It was only by accident that I learned that she was in his power—only by bribery and the friendship of old Bartomeo, that I found opportunity to see and speak to her. If we can effect her rescue at all, it must be by cunning; for you know force will not avail there, and the men are sworn to him, but not to us."

"True," said Monona—"true, but it must be done. As for him—"

"What for him, mother—what for him?" asked Mariano, eagerly.

"That is nothing to you, child—I'll think of that hereafter—now I must study how to remove her out of his power."

"Nothing to me, what is to occur to him—nothing to me!" murmured Mariano, in a low tone, as he turned away. "Ah! if she could but know how my wild heart burns, she would not dare to say that. I will thwart his passion, but he never, never shall come to harm through my agency. Never, never—NEVER!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Captain Allen—or rather, I should say, to verify history and drop compliment, Lieutenant-Commandant Allen—had just mustered his crew, while the good schooner completely refitted so far as sails, rigging, etc., were concerned, was standing off from Matanzas Bay under a cloud of canvas which whitened her from her truck down to her low, black hull. He had mustered them to let them know whether they were bound, and what duty was before them. And he had reason to be proud of them, and hopeful for the victory, when he heard their loud and exultant cheers, and the enthusiasm with which they received his announcement of the challenge of Colcefrinas and his acceptance thereof. Cheer followed cheer in which the officers felt almost like joining, though it were a matter unheard-of in a disciplined service. But Doctor O'Shaughnessy could not retain his feelings any more than could a new barrel of beer get along unvented without collapsing. Like it, he must give way to the extraneous gas within him, or else "burst."

"Bad luck to the black devil that he is! Hurrah for the chance. We'll have to feather his nest for him!" shouted the doctor, who had vowed by Esculapius and every other saint in the medical calendar, never to forgive the affront which had been put upon him.

Giving orders that all hands should be called to "splice the main brace," or (in land-lubber terms) to take an extra drink of liquor, the commanding officer invited all of "the mess" but the officer of the deck to go into the cabin and take a drink with him. Seeing that the doctor rather held back—he had been very abstemious since his escapade from Colcefrinas—Allen smiled, and said:

"You need not fear, doctor; the wine or brandy this time will be from my private stores."

"Sure it's not the fear o' the crater, cap'n dear, that hangs heavy on me," said O'Shaughnessy, with a sigh. "I've never been afraid of it from my cradle, for I've heard my mother say—Heaven rest the ould lady's soul—that I wanted to be weaned to it afore I was a week old. Ah! 'tis not that which troubles me! But it's the botherin' remembrance of the damage it did me and the service when I took, as I believed, but a friendly glass with that murderin' devil of a pirate."

"Think no more of that—but of our speedy chance to take full satisfaction out of him," said Allen, kindly.

"Faith! to that I'm willing to drink, cap'n dear—but if the murderin' wretch comes beneath your sword in the fight, don't kill him quite intirely—lave enough life in him for me to dale with in a scientific manner a little while. It would be a burnin' shame to let such a big thafe of the world die in a minute, and aisy. If I've an enemy I hate, all I want is, a chance to doctor him to death. People now-a-days, when they punish bad men, don't understand it as they did in the bid times. Why, in the howly Inquisition they kept doctors to kape the men they wanted to kill alive as long as they could, so as to make them suffer the more wid dyin'; and that's the way I'd do with this black Satan!"

And the doctor washed down this kind desire with a heavy dose of cogniac.

The officers all having drank to the success of the cruise, repaired to their various duties, while Allen and the sailing-master took down a chart and began to examine it, preparatory to giving a course.

They had scarcely done this, when an old quarter master, whose boast had been that so far he had been aboard of old Ironsides in her every battle, came down with a message from the officer of the deck that the schooner had made a good offing, and he desired to know what course to lay her on.

"Take a glass of brandy, Marston," said Allen, pouring out a tumbler half full of the amber-fire. "We will give you a course soon."

"Thankee, sir. Long life to you, sir, and death to the bloody pirates!" said the old tar as he carefully took his quid of tobacco from his mouth and put it in the hat which he held, before he raised the glass to his lips.

"That is the island he names in his note," said Allen, as he pointed to one in a group of the Cayos Romano.

"And in a dangerous ground it lays, too, sir," said the master. "Reefs all around, and like as not the half not down which really exist!"

"No matter for that. It is the spot named; and there, if he keeps faith, we must meet him," said Allen, quietly. "For ourselves, we must depend on a bright look-out, and keep the lead going when it will reach bottom."

"That is the worst of the coral reefs," said the master. "You are off soundings one hour, and the next you are high and dry on the back-bone of one of them. I've seen it shoal from five hundred fathoms to three feet in tow cables' length!"

"You can tell the officer of the deck to keep her head east southeast, and to carry all the sail she'll bear without strain," said the captain to the quarter-master.

"Ay, ay! sir—thankee, sir!" And the old tar gave an extra pull at his fore-lock, restored his quid of tobacco, put on his tarpaulin, and hurried on deck with his directions.

"Another glass of wine, Mr. Howell," said Allen to the master.

"Thank you, sir; and then I will go and take the bearing and distance to mark our departure."

This was, of course, a most necessary matter; for in those latitudes, where storms are frequent, a vessel has often to depend very much on the keep of her "dead reckoning"; that is, departure, distance, courses, leeway, etc., for observations cannot always be taken. But with either or both, the navigation of those seas is, and ever will be, dangerous; for there are a thousand winding currents, formed by islands and by reefs, which can never be fully known, and for which the mariner can make but scant allowance.

Not a gale arises there, even in these days of steam and perfection in seamanship, but fills the papers with accounts of wreck and disaster in those fatal seas.

Hatteras has ceased to be a terror—Cape Fear is no longer feared—even the Barnegat wreckers are now seldom heard of; but insurance does and ever will run high for those who navigate the southern Gulf Stream, or make the Bahama passages.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Land ho!" shouted the look-out from the masthead of the Alligator about 8 o'clock on the afternoon of her second day out from Matanzas, on the cruise commenced in our last chapter.

"Where away and what is it like?" cried the officer of the deck through his trumpet.

"Nearly dead ahead, sir, and like a small island. There's a loom as if more of 'em was beyond, and a bit to windward—but I can't make 'em out."

Allen, who had come on deck at the first sound of the look-out's voice, now hailed:

"Look carefully and see if you see any sign of a vessel at anchor."

"Ay, ay! sir!" said the man, and a young reefer anxious to please his commander, took a spy-glass, and went aloft as lively as a monkey.

"I can see nothing like a vessel in there, sir," said the look-out, after a careful glance ahead.

"But I can see a sail, sir, under canvas away off on our weather-beam to the southward, sir," cried the little reefer, in a voice as shrill as that of an ancient maiden singing Old Hundred.

"Thank you, Mr. Rogers—thank you, sir," said the captain to the delighted youngster, who'd have ventured his life any time for such a "thank you" before all the crew. "Can you make out her rig?"

"Yes, sir—quite plain. A foretopsail schooner like this. I'm sure she's the pirate!"

"Most likely," said the captain, quietly.

"We are now quite out of range of trading vessels, and on the ground where she promised to meet us."

"I am sorry the wind is dying away, sir. We can scarcely keep steerage way on her," said the officer of the deck.

"We shall have more than we want before many hours, if the weather don't belie its looks," said Allen, as he glanced off to the northwest, where a range of clouds lay heavy and dark, like some vast machine of destruction, waiting but a touch to set it in motion, or a huge army which needed but the word of command to send it onward to its terrible work of death.

The old quarter-master, Marston, was at the helm, and more than once already his eye had been turned toward that cloud-bank. Allen noticed it, and with a familiarity which he sometimes used toward his oldest and best men, asked:

"What does that look like to you, Marston?"

"It looks as if 'twould come heavy and not go down all at once, sir! We come anigh losing old Ironsides once—we took just such a chap a little to the eastward of the hole in the wall, and had to send for it. How we got through, the Lord only knows; for 'twas right in the middle of the day, but we drove afore it till we got ahead, or it gave up, and then we was in a bite of the gulf away in by Lousyany somewhere."

"If this breeze would only last until I could settle with Colcefrinas, I'd scarcely ask any favors of a gale afterward," said Allen to himself. Then, turning to his first-lieutenant, he said: "You may as well exercise the men at quarters for half an hour or so, sir, to keep their hands in, and then the vessel will be ready for action, no matter what turns up in the meantime."

"Ay, ay! sir!" was the ready response of the officer, and in a few moments the cheery sounds of drum and fife called all hands to their quarters.

Busy time, and a right gallant sight to those who love it, is going to quarters and clearing ship for action. There's a place for every one and everything—the fires are put out, save the one where the matches are put alight—the magazines are opened, arms distributed to boarders and pike-men—the powder-monkeys rush to and fro between the magazines and the guns they serve—shot, round, grape, canister, chain, and double-headed, are passed up—the surgeon is below with his instruments—the sail-trimmers at their post, every officer at his, and the commander here, there and everywhere, until the ship is at work, and then his stand is beneath the flag which he will defend while life lasts.

"Shall we exercise great guns or small arms, or both, sir?" asked the first-lieutenant, after he had reported all the crew at quarters.

"Both, sir, for a little while!" was the reply. "But do not fatigue the men—if this breeze does not entirely fail, we'll have our enemy in shot yet before dark."

"With firing—or only the exercise?"

"You can fire one round to scale the guns, and then see that each officer is careful in loading and shooting for a broadside that will tell."

"Ay, ay! sir!" And in a moment the orders of the commander were conveyed through the executive to the officer of each division.

Then came the low tones but busy commands: "Cast loose your guns—take out the tompons, man the gun tackles, etc. In a short time, the divisions being directed to fire

in succession, the first applied their matches. After a long fizzle, the powder in the guns burned with barely sufficient force to throw the ball out, but not far enough to do damage at half pistol shot.

"What can this mean, sir?" cried Allen, angrily, to the first-lieutenant. "That powder has been wet! Have the other guns tried at once."

The trial was made, and each gun proved the utter worthlessness of the load.

"Let the gunner be sent for," said Allen, as he paced up and down the quarter-deck.

That person soon made his appearance.

"What is the matter with our powder, Mr. Citly?" cried Allen.

"Nothing that I know of, sir—it is in the same condition in which it came to me."

"No dampness in the magazine—no leak there?"

"None, sir—it was never dryer than it is now."

"Is not this the same powder which I tried the other day, sent to us by the governor or Intendente of Matanzas?"

"It is powder that he sent, sir; but that which he sent as a specimen you used on trial."

"My God! can the villain have given us worthless powder so as to cripple us? Try treble loads of this, and see what we can do with it," groaned Allen, who was convinced that he had again been overreached, in spite of all his precautions.

"It is of no use to treble the load; only so much of the miserable stuff will burn, sir," replied the lieutenant, after trial had been made.

"Thank Heaven for the storm that is coming, for coming it is, and fast; for that only can take us out of this scrape. But I'll make that rascally governor sweat for this, or eat my commission," cried Allen. "Beat the retreat, and bear a hand to secure ship for a blow. You can see with half an eye that it is coming heavy and fast."

These orders were hastily obeyed, for the northwestern sky was now all black with the ragged advance-guards of the storm. Yet where the vessel now lay idly rocking on the sea, there was not wind enough to fill a sail, or even to lift the lazy pendant which dropped from the main truck. And the pirate, now some eight or ten miles off, it was seen, was also entirely becalmed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The well-disciplined crew of the Alligator had soon taken in the light canvas aloft; and before even a sail had been furled on the spars of the enemy, the American had not only been reduced to a close-reefed mainsail, unbonneted foresail and fore-storm staysail, but had got her royal and topgallant masts housed, and flying-jibboom rigged in, her guns housed, tackle doubled, and all made ready to meet the hurricane.

But Colcefrinas held on, apparently hoping to get nearer to the vessel that he intended to have taken, if such a thing could be; or, perhaps, in hopes to make a harbor in some well known spot at the island ahead.

Allen was not only a brave man, but a thorough seaman—both indispensable requisites in the composition of a naval hero: such a one as was Nelson, Decatur, or Paul Jones. He knew that his schooner, without powder, was not in fighting order; but yet he determined so to keep her under control that the storm should either aid him to escape, or, if possible, to board his enemy—where, man to man, and steel to steel, he had no fear for a victory. This could only be done by the preservation of his canvas and spars.

Having had his vessel brought as nearly head to the coming gale, by the use of sweeps, as could be done, Allen—with a calm face and quiet eye, but an anxious heart—waited for its coming; now glancing to the southward, where, the pirate, at last, was hurriedly shortening sail—and then looking to windward, to see how soon the storm-king would be down upon him.

Not long had he to wait. Its distant roar, like the tumultuous voices of a numberless multitude of maddened men, came sweeping over the waters; the light fled from before its ebon front; the waters rose in a wall of foamy white, as they felt its strong breath; and the oldest of those hardy seamen looked for a spar or a rope to clutch when the gale should strike their brave yet feeble craft.

"Hold on all! Two men at the helm, and when she veers, let her go before it. Let a

full gang of men stand by the sheets of the sails set!" cried Allen, but a moment before the gale struck them; and as he spoke, he glanced toward the pirate, and saw that she had not got more than half of her canvas in. The next second, she was shut out from his view; for the storm, with its deafening roar its blinding spray, its fearful, down-diving strength, was upon him.

Reader—you who shudder at a little blow, which bends the trees before your door, or tears off a few of its leaves or twigs: which may rip up a rotten awning, or tear off a few decayed shingles, and which an interior editor sometimes terms a "tornado"—you can have no idea of a West India hurricane. You have heard people say, when it rained very, very heavily, that "it doesn't rain—it pours!" Well, a hurricane don't blow; it—I can't tell what it does! It tears sky, earth, water, air, all into rags, and then shreds them. I've seen three of them in my nautical life-time, and don't wish to see another, at any price!

For a moment, the beautiful schooner seemed overwhelmed with the mass of spray and foam upon her decks, and the weight of wind which seemed to sweep down upon rather than over her; and her booms, instead of lifting, seemed to go under, and she to gather stern-board as if the water slid from under her. But as the wind caught the staysail, but slightly at first, in a moment after more freely, the bows began to veer—slowly at first, then swifter and swifter, until in a few moments she was dead before it; and the sheets, having been eased off by strong and skillful men, who received their orders by signs—for no voice could be heard there—she flew along, with her scant canvas full, and strained to its utmost strength. And wild as was the gale, so carefully had all requisites been attended to, that she was as completely under the control of her helmsman, while they had open water before them, as if there had been but a gentle breeze blowing.

On, on she sped, for perchance half an hour, in a darkness almost as dense as that of night, while Allen and his officers kept close watch for the pirate; for the course upon which they were driven was nearly or quite toward where he had last been seen. Suddenly, close aboard on their starboard hand, she was seen, but for an instant: an almost dismantled hulk—her hull encumbered with the wreck of spars and tattered sails, yet driving in the same direction as themselves.

Allen had time only to get a glance at the face of Colcefrinas, who, white with rage, shook his hand at him as they passed; and then they were separated, to meet again—when, neither knew.

By signs, Allen now caused the crew to take in both the main and foresail; and had he dared, he would have brought the vessel by the wind—for he asked no more now than a chance to meet his foe, while his vessel was so crippled that it could be boarded by Allen without exposing the crew of the latter to the batteries of the well-munitioned foe. But the hurricane was in its strength still, and no vessel could have done otherwise than send before it. His only hope was that it might lull in time for him to take aback track, before his enemy could so repair his craft as to be able to work and manœuvre his vessel. But on through the long night she flew, until the noon of the next day, when the wind died away into a gentler gale; and well indeed was it for that brave crew that it did: for scarcely had a man stepped above the rail when the welcome order to make sail was given, than the cry of "land ho!" was heard.

And there it was—the rock-bound coast of Cuba—so close aboard, that two hours more of that hurricane would have driven the brave schooner upon it: and that would have been the end of her and hers.

"It seems to me that this part of the coast looks familiar, sir," said the first lieutenant to the young commander, as both were surveying it through their spy-glasses.

"I know it well," said Allen; "but where our consorts have found a harbor is a mystery to me. I can see the channel where they were when we sailed, and the sea breaks high upon the reefs which acted as a breakwater there. But I see no sign of a vessel in shore anywhere."

"Perhaps they have found a harbor under the lee of some of the islands near. I know that neither Gregory nor Kearney would break their promise not to leave, without they were forced to do it by stress of weather."

"True. Fire a gun, and perhaps it will be heard and answered by them!" said Allen.

"You forget, sir, that our powder won't burn," said the lieutenant, with a smile.

"I do not forget, though, that I have a small keg of Dupont's prime rifle-powder in my state-room, sought for my own private use. Take that," replied Allen.

In a little while, a gun was loaded with this powder, and its heavy report went "bundering" over the water.

And not more than five minutes had elapsed before an answering gun was heard, away in shore, among the islands; and soon a boat was discovered making out from behind a point toward the old anchorage. At about the same time, a man who was aloft, fiddling the main-royal-mast, sang out that he saw the masts of vessels over the tree-tops ahead.

"All is right yet," said Allen. "As powder is all we want, we can get it from them, and stand out yet and catch our adversary, before he knows that we have changed our bad powder for good, and his very surprise will weaken him."

"True, sir. We are indeed fortune-favored on this cruise. Shall I make more sail?"

"No; stand in, under easy canvas, till we speak the boat. Perchance they can pilot us into a better harbor, where a night's rest for the crew and a chance to tauten our stretched rigging will not lessen our efficiency!"

In a short time the schooner reached the anchorage, where the boat boarded her, proving to be one from one of the other vessels which had found safe anchorage in a small bay between the islands, and out-rode the gale without a strain upon their cables. Allen at once decided to run in there, and make his preparations for going to sea with his consorts in the morning—confident that the pirate could not escape all three, if they took different courses to intercept him; for now, in consequence of the treachery in his supply of powder, evidently known to, if not concocted by Colcefrinas, he felt himself freed from all conditions to meet him singly, and intended—as he had done at first—to hunt him out and destroy him as he would a bloodhound, or any other cruel, worthless, and merciless beast.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When, from his keen-eyed look-out aloft, Colcefrinas first heard that the island of his challenged battle-ground was in sight, and also that a sail which well he knew was the Alligator was also on the ground, his joy was more like that of a savage than a man. He ordered a cask of brandy brought on deck, and the head to be staved in. Then, with his own hands, he stirred in pound after pound of gunpowder, after the manner of the old buccaniers, whose actions he loved but too well to imitate in more ways than one; and drinking first himself, bade each of the crew follow his example.

"Here"—he cried, holding a drinking-cup only used by him on such occasions as this, or after some fearful battle—a cup composed of a HUMAN SKULL—"here is that we may drink the blood of our Yankee foes ere the sun sets in the west, or else sup with the devil in Brimstone Hall below!"

With fiendish shouts the pirates crowded up, and from that well-known cup, which more than once had been reddened by the tide of life, they followed their leader's draught and toast! And then they danced and sang like demons, and drank until they were maddened into tigers rather than men—if men they ever were.

Meanwhile, Colcefrinas raved, and stamped, and swore, because the wind did not blow stronger to carry him more quickly to the place where he supposed his victim would fall into his power.

The curses of bad men avail not much—at least this was the case with Colcefrinas, for the more he stormed the less the wind blew, until at last it died away, and his vessel rocked idly in the calm. The look-out, who had come down from aloft to get his allowance of grog, had not noticed the taking in of canvas on board the American, nor had any of the officers or crew been sufficiently observant to see the now swift-rising storm.

And they had drank; and Colcefrinas would have raved until it had been upon them all unprepared, probably, had not a new idea struck his mind.

"We will board them in our boats!" he cried. "They have no powder to hurt us, and we can cut their throats like dogs as they are!"

Again and again the crew cheered; and Colcefrinas raised his glass to see how far away she was. At first, he could not see her, for her canvas had been reduced, and she seemed but a speck on the yet glassy sea—no larger than a gull resting on its bosom. But when he did, and saw that she had not only shortened sail, but was also sending down her upper spars, his seaman's sense at once returning, to him told him the reason, and a quick glance at the swift-coming storm also made him aware of the peril to his own craft.

"Silence, fore and aft!" he shouted. "Let go sheets and halliards by the run. Clew up, brail up, haul down, and furl everything. Work, curse you, work, or the storm will do the work for you!"

The men, thus urged by one who seldom spoke so much without dire necessity, sprung to their work as rapidly as they could. But some were half-helpless from drink; for though combat would have maddened them, they had no moral courage to meet this new danger, and their brute strength left them. The sheets and halliards were let go in a moment, and many men sprung aloft to furl the sails. But before this could be half done, the gale was upon them, and though their chief shouted to them to lay down from aloft and save themselves, not half who went up could do it, before the fierce storm came crashing, with its thundering force, along—shivering spars and rending sails like reeds and rotten fibres with its breath. And men and spars went together over into the seething foam, and the staunch vessel would herself inevitably have gone under, had she not by chance-drift have happened to be heading directly from the storm when it struck her. She buried for a moment; then, as her weight of spars went over her bows, she staggered up, and, with all their weight clinging to and clogging her hull, wallowed on amid the fearful chaos of the tempest.

In terror at the fate of so many of their comrades, and appalled by the suddenness of the peril, the crew who were left worked but feebly in clearing away the wreck. She was in this condition when, light and free, guided like a bird before the wind, the American schooner, which they had almost deemed their prize, flew by them—their colors aloft, their crew safe, their officers exultant, even amid the storm.

Colcefrinas was almost mad enough to slay himself. He shook his clenched fist at the passing vessel, and shouted out his bitterest curses; but they could not rise even to his own ear above the wild roar of the hurricane. And a moment later, the vessel was far ahead in the gloom. He glanced at the compass a moment, and muttered: "Let it blow so for ten or twelve hours more, and her bones will grate on Cuban rocks!"

Then, with some of his best men under his immediate eye, he set to work, with a seaman's skill, to clear away the spars that were adrift, and to get the noble craft beneath him into something like working order.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In that grand but gloomy cavern-home—or prison, should I call it—poor Maraquita de Regla hardly knew the difference between day and night, except as she might judge by the time when two black mutes—or mutes they seemed to be; for they never spoke to her except by signs—brought her food and drink. No time-piece was there amid all the rest of the luxurious furniture; and if there had been, she would have paid but little note to time, except to feel that the hours were terribly wearisome and long.

One night—she judged 'twas night, because some hours before her supper had been brought—she woke from an uneasy slumber, and started—for above her couch bent a tall and stately woman of rare and queenly beauty. She was not regarding her with a look of extraordinary kindness, nor yet with an express on apparently other than that of curiosity. How she came there, from whence, and for what purpose—who she was, were all questions immediately asked in Maraquita's mind; but not responded to. The poor girl had again somewhat drooped since Mariano's last interview with her; for Hope's is but a flickering fire, and must be fed constantly to burn brightly.

Maraquita was about to speak, but the stranger anticipated her:

"Do you love Eduardo Colcefrinas?" she asked.

"No! I loathe him!" was the ready rep-

of the captive; and her look gave treble force to her words.

"It is well you do! If you had ever dared to love him, *this* should have been your reward!" And the woman exhibited a dagger.

"Better that than this cruel captivity!" said Maraquita, with dignity.

"You shall be free! Mariano, come here!" replied the woman, who was none other than Monona.

Mariano, who had remained hidden from Maraquita's sight by the curtains of the couch, now stepped forward.

"Mariano, I accept your plan!" said Monona, in a quiet tone—but one of command. "You will change garments with this girl, and remain in her place. He dare not harm *my* child!"

"I do not fear that he will, my mother—I am ready to do your bidding!" said the youth. Then, noticing the modest blush which suddenly replaced the paleness upon Maraquita's cheeks, Mariano added: "Have no fear, lady. I am, like yourself, a maiden; but have worn a boy's garb from my childhood, by my mother's command. Perchance, she will explain to you why she so commanded. Not even my master has ever divined my sex. I pray you to exchange garments with me without fear; my disguise will effectually aid in your escape; for no one questions where Mariano goes. Your figure is much the same as mine in size—your hair can easily be arranged in the same way, and I have brought a cosmetic which will give your face the hue which the sun and wind has given mine. Do not delay, lady. Colcefrinas is away, but may return at any hour; and we risk our lives to effect your release. What we do, must be done quickly!"

It needed no more argument to make Maraquita decide upon her course—no further words to hasten her action.

"I am ready—do with me as you will!" she said.

And as women, when they will, do with a will what they *will*, rapidly, so it required but a short time to make the required transfer of garments; and as Mariana—as we are now to term her; the *a* and the *o* alone determining the nominative masculine in Spanish—moved across the room, no one would have believed but that she had always been used to the garments she wore. Maraquita, though made to look exceedingly like what Mariano had been, did not move with the same ease; although she did very well, considering, also, that this was not her first masquerade in garments unsuited to her sex.

Come, hasten now; we need delay no longer!" said Monona, impatiently, to Maraquita. "Take this dagger, Mariana!" said she to her child. "I need not tell you how to use it, should he further strive to wrong me or thee!"

Mariana took the glittering weapon, kissed her mother coldly, saluted Maraquita with a fervor that made her blush through her new cosmetic, and then waved them away.

A moment more, and they were gone. She was alone. For a moment she seemed to feel weak and like a real woman, for a heavy sigh broke from her bosom, and tears came out from her great black eyes, and rolled down upon her breast. But she hushed the sigh, shook the tears from her ebon lashes, and, moving before one of the massive mirrors, surveyed herself from head to foot.

"De Regla's child," she said, "is pretty, more childish than I; yet not so beautiful by half! What will he say when he knows the secret so long and so well kept as this has been? He will be angry at her loss, and, perchance, will slay me! I shall not shrink from the blow that comes from his hands. But he must not spurn me—he must not do that! I can be his slave if he loves me—his death if he despises me! I would he were here—I am tired of captivity already! But I will try to sleep, and then I may dream as I have dreamed before—happy, *such* happy dreams!"

And, in a careless way, Mariana cast herself on the couch whereon poor Maraquita had tossed so restlessly, and soon was wrapped in a profound slumber.

And there, for the present, we must leave her, while we turn again to the rough waters of the sleepless sea.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The day which opened upon Allen at the anchorage chosen by his consorts, was as clear and pleasant as if hurricanes never occurred in those latitudes. It was as pleasant as some fair faces we have seen, which, to look on them, appear to be proof against the storms of anger

or the clouds of wrath. It opened busily for Allen, for from each of his consorts he was receiving a share of good ammunition in place of the worthless trash which he had cast overboard. And the sun was not high in the eastern sky, when he found his craft once more ready, not only for sea but for action—everything this time having been fairly tested and overhauled; and before it had reached the meridian, he, with his consorts, was standing off the coast, each of them diverging to the right and left—or, in more proper terms, to the eastward and westward—while he, with keen-eyed look-outs at the mast-heads, stood on the course which the gale had marked on the day before.

His beautiful craft now had every spar in its place—all of her light kites were spread, or such at least as she could carry close hauled on a wind; for the wind, though light now, had not changed in direction. Her gay flag floated from the gaff—her long pendant streamed from the peak, her crew seemed as light in heart as they had proportionally been saddened, when they found their powder worthless. And when, ere yet the land was out of sight, the look-outs sighted a sail to windward, an involuntary cheer burst from every throat, for the men seemed to think no other vessel could be in their path than that for which they were in search.

Once more, and this time with a heart beating strong with hope and ambition, Allen gave the order to beat to quarters, and the men and officers sprang to their stations with an alacrity which proved their anxiety to be at work to be at least equal to his own. The men were at once put to exercise, while the vessel rapidly clove the water in the direction of the just-discovered sail.

Allen, taking his telescope, went forward to examine her, and when he saw that it was a vessel almost entirely dismantled, he did not doubt but that it was the pirate; but wondered why a man like Colcefrinas should not have sooner got up jury-masts and put her into something like working order.

While he was thus cogitating, the look-out aloft announced another sail in sight, a little to windward of the first; and without having occasion to ask any questions, Allen at once saw the other stranger, which appeared to have been under little or no canvas, and had thus been unnoticed. But now, as if by magic, her taut spars were covered with canvas, and she seemed to haul up on the same course which the Alligator was heading.

Allen did not need superhuman sagacity to understand how matters stood. He recognized the "Pilot" by her build and rig in a moment, and knew intuitively that the dismantled vessel was some unfortunate merchantman which had been taken by the pirate—perhaps been entrapped by her signals of distress, and her spurs, sails, rigging, etc., used to refit the storm-disabled schooner.

But sad as the thought was, that the crew of the merchantman might have perished, perhaps even then lay bleeding on her decks, Allen only joyed at the sight of the vessel beyond, and in his hopes soon to have her under his batteries. But why, when thus evidently ready for action, she should fly from him instead of awaiting his approach, at first astonished him; but comprehending that the sails of his consorts were in sight yet, his wonder ceased; and that especially, when he saw that they had altered their courses, and had hauled on a wind in his direction. He now regretted that he had not left them at their anchorage and sought the adventure alone. But it was too late for regrets. Having the retreat bent, he directed the energies of officers and men to trimming the sails and doing all that could be done to increase his speed. The enemy was at least five or six miles to windward; and well he knew that the chase would be a long one if Colcefrinas so willed it—for the two vessels, if trimmed aright, were nearly equals.

In less than an hour from the time when she was first sighted, Allen was close alongside of the dismantled vessel, which proved, as he supposed, an American merchantman, schooner rigged and Baltimore built; and she had served but too good a purpose for the pirate when she fell into his power. Not a living soul from her greeted the approach of the man-of-war, and Allen was too eager in his chase to pause to board her. That he left for his slower-sailing consorts to do. But he ran so close that he and his crew could see the dead bodies of the butchered men, who had composed the crew of the unfortunate vessel,

and more than one oath was registered to avenge the hapless creatures.

The breeze grew fresher as the vessels stood off, and they soon had all they could do to carry top-gallant sails with "a clear full" on, and the white caps danced merrily on the crests of the huge blue waves.

From time to time Allen sighted the distance between the two vessels with his sextant, to see if he gained; and frequently was he tempted to fire a challenging gun to windward, to try and taunt his foe into bringing to for battle. But he wished, so long as he could, to keep the latter from becoming aware that he had good powder on board; and as he was very fast dropping his consorts astern, he hoped every hour to see the pirate heave to and give him a chance to close.

But night was fast approaching, and he began to fear that the wily villain intended indeed to fly, and in the coming darkness might escape, when, while yet the sun was an half hour or more high, and the sails of his consorts almost out of sight astern, the pirate was seen to take in his top-gallantsail, brail up his foresail, and make a show of preparation for action, by running off with the wind a little free.

Cheers broke from the lips of the American crew when they saw this, for they felt that the long-desired hour was now at hand.

"Oh, for a few hours more of daylight!" muttered Allen, to himself, as he glanced at the height of the sun.

"She will be ours before dark, sir!" said the first lieutenant, who had overheard his expression.

"Perhaps—but if she tries yet to escape us, the coming darkness will favor her. Her escape is all that I fear!" replied Allen.

Still standing on under a press of canvas, the Alligator was soon within gunshot of the pirate; and then Allen began to trim in his canvas for work. The enemy did not open fire, undoubtedly waiting for Allen to try his poor powder first; but the latter determining to hide the advantage which he knew he had, held his fire also; and just as the sun began to dip beneath the western waters, ranged along the weather-beam of the pirate, and within hailing distance.

Colcefrinas, dressed magnificently, stood on the weather-rail of his vessel, and hailing, said:

"I am waiting for you to open the ball with a salute, my gallant Yankee!"

"You shall have your desire, sir!" shouted Allen, and at a wave of his hand, to the utter astonishment of the pirate, a crashing broadside was poured into him, of shot not sent by *Mutanzas powder*.

"Hell and furies! De Regla has played me false!" shouted Colcefrinas, as he sprang to the helm himself, to put it hard-a-lee, to save his vessel from being raked by the American, which was wearing around his stern, while the men were hurriedly reloading the batteries just fired."

And the pirates, who, taken altogether by surprise, at first were panic-struck, now sprang to their guns; and on both sides the firing became hot and heavy.

And now the skill of the two commanders, as well as their bravery, was brought into play. Allen, finding that he could not so manoeuvre as to rake his wily foe, sought to make the conflict brief by boarding him. But Colcefrinas, much as he would have desired it had his crew been full, had lost too many men in the storm, and in the unexpected broadside, to risk a hand-to-hand encounter; and he only sought to hold his own until night set in, that he might escape in the darkness. Passing forward among his gunners the order to cripple the American in his spars, he managed by skillful manoeuvres to baffle Allen in every attempt to get alongside. The gunners of the Alligator, only thinking of sending as many pirates as they could to eternity, poured in their grape and canister, and it was not until it was too late that Allen found that only round and chain shot were returned, to knock away his spars and cut his rigging.

Darkness had come on, although from the very commencement of the action both vessels had been in the darkness of a cloud of smoke, when suddenly the fire of the pirate ceased—although it had been tremendously heavy until the very instant before it stopped.

"She has surrendered!" shouted many a voice on board the American; and more than one dying tar lifted his head to hear those words—more than one man sorely wounded ceased his groans, as they heard the cry.

But poor Allen, who though twice wounded would not leave the deck, gnashed his teeth in very anger at this silence, for he knew that his almost conquered foe was creeping away from him under cover of the night. And the reports which came to him of crippled spars told him that he could not, even could he see his enemy, pursue him, until new spars had been sent up, others secured, and new rigging rove.

The crew could hardly realize, in the utter silence which succeeded the thunder of broadsides, and the yells of fierce combatants, that their enemy had crept off; and it was long before they would believe it—long before they ceased to look for the flash of his guns, or to listen for sounds betokening that he was in the vicinity. It seemed impossible that he could have gone off so still.

The loss of the Alligator in *raen* was not near so great in the action as would have been supposed, when she had been almost yard-arm and yard-arm in action for a half hour or more—but the very means taken to cripple her spars, saved her men?

CHAPTER XXX.

The Alligator once more lay at an anchor in the bay from whence she sailed before her combat with Colcefrinas, as described last. It had been necessary for her to run in to repair damages, but her consorts were actively cruising outside, and she soon expected to join them, and Allen yet hoped to test the prowess of the pirate chief in another combat.

Allen was below with O'Shaughnessy looking over his daily report of the wounded and sick, and hearing his verbal statement of their condition, when a messenger from the officer of the deck announced that a boat had shown itself some way in land, with a white flag flying.

"Hoist a white flag, sir, at our fore to encourage the boat to come on board, and if it comes, assure its crew that their flag shall be respected!" said the young commander. "I will be on deck in a moment!"

"Whew! I wonder what'll be done next by the murthern' spalpeens!" said O'Shaughnessy. "They're like that sort o' Christians that sarve the Lord of a Sunday, and ould Nick the rest o' the week!"

"How do you make that out, doctor?" asked Allen, with a smile.

"Why sure, cap'n dear, haven't they been a wearin' the black flag all the while, and now raise the white one for convaynience. I hope they're wanting a doctor to cure their big thafe o' a leader!"

"Would you volunteer, doctor?"

"Only let 'em try me once, sir!" said the doctor with a look that indicated a desire to do something desperate—but as it was directed toward the brandy-decanter on the side-board, Allen invited him to take something to drink, which he did without any apparent reluctance.

When Allen reached the deck, the boat with the white flag had already been alongside, and leaving a young man on the deck, had instantly shoved off, and pulled away.

"What does this mean, and why did not the boat remain?" asked Allen of the officer of the deck.

"I know not, sir, perhaps this young man can explain—but I see that he is blindfolded, perhaps he is a released captive!"

"Few of their captives are released but by the hand of Death!" said Allen, as the supposed young man, finding himself free, tore off the bandage from before his eyes with his own hands.

A low cry of surprise broke from the lips of the stranger, and Allen who had little expected such a meeting, or such pleasure, cried, in astonishment:

"Heavens! You, *senorita*—you here, and free from the power of Colcefrinas?"

Maraquita de Regla—it could be none other—gave him one look, then as if struck down by the suddenness of her joy, fell senseless to the deck.

Allen, heedless of all but her, caught her up in his own arms, and bore her into the cabin, calling to Doctor O'Shaughnessy to follow him.

"Do all you can to restore her, sir—do it quickly!" he said, as he laid his fair burden down upon the cushioned transom seat.

"Is it a *her*, cap'n, and in boy's clothes, too? She's mighty purty for a pirate!"

"Silence, sir, I wish no observations, but the use of your skill, sir!"

"Then, cap'n, if you plaze, either take off her jacket, or else rip up the slave of it—it's

bladin' her I'd be affiler doin'!" said the doctor, rather testily, for he did not fancy either the captain's words or tone to him.

"She must not be bled—where is your sal volatile—here, steward, bring me some wine and water! Bear a hand with them!"

The doctor was about again to urge the necessity of his favorite practice—bleeding, when the poor girl opened her eyes, and began to recover without aid. Allen placed some wine and water to her lips, and as the flush of returning strength came out upon her cheek, he turned to the doctor and said:

"I can dispense with your services now, doctor! If I spoke too harshly, excuse me—I was extremely alarmed for the safety of the lady!"

"Ah, cap'n dear, a rough word from you would never fray the silken cord o' friendship that binds me to you. Deuce the bit. If the young lady, sir, should feel nervous, if you'll take my poor advice, a drop of smooth ould brandy would set her all right. I've some tip-top that I got from ould Mother Mallony in Key West!" said the doctor, and he bowed himself out of the cabin.

"Tell me how you escaped, dear lady, and by what strange good fortune I have the happiness to receive you here!" asked Allen, the moment that he was left alone with the lady.

"Señor, I scarcely know. I was his captive—am free; but why I became free, I am not fully certain. But I believe the jealousy of a mistress or wife of his has been the happy cause. Whatever it was, I bless Heaven that I am free and safe, for beneath your flag I know I will be protected!"

"With my life, and that of every one on board, dear lady. But when did you see this monster—can you give me no directions by which I may trace him to his haunts, and there destroy him?"

"Would to Heaven that I could!" said Maraquita. I have not seen him for three or four days, and then he only paid me a visit to taunt me with his threats, saying that in three days he would have your head, and then force me to become his bride. He swore that you were in his power, and I trembled lest it was true!"

"He thought so, and by treachery I nearly became so; but he has learned his error, and it has cost him dearly!" replied Allen—in generous kindness withholding the nature of the treachery by which he had so nearly fallen into the power of Colcefrinas. "But from whence came you to-day?"

"From his main rendezvous, I should judge; for from the latticed blinds of a house where I was kept some hours, I saw many vessels and men. During the night before I had been removed from a cave where he has collected immense treasures, and where he had me confined after I was taken with poor Captain Howard!"

"Where is he?"

"I know not. I have not seen him since the hour of my capture. I have not been carried anywhere without having my eyes bandaged!"

"The place of rendezvous cannot be far from here!" said Allen, thoughtfully. "Have you an idea of the length of time they were engaged in bringing you here?"

"Not more than three or four hours, certainly!"

"Then I will have this coast scoured so closely that its whereabouts cannot fail to be learned. That done, and the infamous wretches shall be exterminated! But dear lady, how to make you comfortable will be my first thought. Should you desire to be sent to Matanzas?"

"I have no such desire, sir! I fled from my father's house to escape his tyranny, and a forced union with a man whose crimes he knows, and the profits of which I fear he shares. But I know you are too noble and generous to use this belief of mine against him!"

"I would not harm him for the world, lady—if I wished, I have grave cause to do it. But for your sake I ignore that all; and if you will give me the bliss of becoming lawfully your protector, the moment that duty will permit, I will sail for a port where we can be united!"

"The heart which has so long been yours, trusts to you entirely!" said the lady, frankly—for hers was not the nature, nor was she of a nation that is icy, or backward in expressing the strength of its passions.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"*Madre de Dios!* What, what does this mean? Your vessel, with the evidences of recent combat in her pierced hull and sails, brought to an anchor in our port, in broad day-light; and you, armed to the teeth, stalk

through the town and into the palace, as if you were lord of both!"

These words, half in anger, and half in terror, were spoken by Don Garcia de Regla, to the pirate chief, soon after his escape from Allen. And it was no wonder that the audacity and fearless boldness of the pirate astonished as well as frightened De Regla. The fact that his was not a national vessel, though on this occasion she wore Spanish colors, must come out; and De Regla knew not how to act.

"I did not come here to answer questions, Garcia de Regla, but to ask them!" said Colcefrinas, sternly. "Why, did you give that infernal Yankee good powder?"

"I did not! He was supplied with the damaged!"

"Garcia de Regla, you need not lie to me!"

"Lie? Do you dare to use such language to me?"

"Ay, worse than words! I have lost more than half my men by your treachery! I ran my vessel right under his broadside, and taunted him to fire, when my crew was already weakened by disaster, intending to cut him up at leisure, believing the word that you sent was true, and that his powder was worthless!"

"The powder which I furnished him was so!"

"The loss of more than half my men prove that!" said the pirate, bitterly.

"He may have got powder elsewhere!" said De Regla, who, for many reasons, wished not to excite the pirate more.

"Impossible! He has been in no port but this. It is your treachery. Garcia de Regla, I see through it all! You have tired of me and our compact, and thought to be rid of me. But mark you, Colcefrinas, the master of fifteen hundred daring men, and more than fifty millions of dollars, is not to be destroyed in a moment. You are in my power—body and soul—you are in my power, sir! your child is in my hands, and if I take ten thoughts upon the subject, I will probably feel more than half inclined to take you and hang you before her face!"

"You are going too far, sir!" said the marquis; for Castilian pride, as well as some native courage, began to come back to his aid. "Were I but to breathe your name, or the character of your vessel here—"

"Well, what then?" asked the pirate, with a sneer.

The marquis did not know what to say.

"I would tell the people and the soldiers that their Intendente was my *compañero*—that he was an old hand at the trade, and that if they didn't want their town burned up, they would beware how they angered Colcefrinas! And they—they would tremble as you do now, Garcia de Regla!"

"I do not tremble, or if I do, it is with anger, not with fear!" said the old Spaniard.

"A child's anger is not dangerous. But call in some wine, De Regla—I am thirsty! I came here hot, and you've said nothing to cool me yet!"

"When will you leave this port?" asked the marquis, not heeding the demand of the other.

"When it so pleases me—not before. I called for wine. Will you order it, or shall I ring for a servant?"

"I will order refreshments; I would do that if the devil asked them. But suppose the American fleet were to come in here now?"

"I would run my vessel under the guns of your fort, and make you protect me."

"Make me?"

"Yes; or else drag you on board, and blow you, and myself, and all that's dear to you, up together."

"Is my daughter on board of your vessel?"

"No; she is where she is treated like a queen, and will be, so long as she and her father behave properly. But I have not done with you in regard to that powder."

"On my honor, I swear!"

"Tush! Swear by something tangible—something that exists."

"I tell you, by my honor as a Castilian—by every tie that is binding on earth or in heaven, that I gave him the poor powder!"

"Then he has made it good by some Yankee trick; for I had all that I could do to escape him. Had he been favored with an hour more of daylight, it would have been my last cruise!"

Had the marquis expressed the wish that was in his heart, it would have been, that Allen had been favored with sufficient light to have put Colcefrinas out of his way forever.

But he did not; and ordered wine and brandy from a servant who answered the bell he had rung.

"You would like to know why I came in here?" said Colcefrinas, after he had tossed off a bumper of brandy—ignoring the wine in its more potent presence.

"I would."

"I had to, to repair damages. The Yankees, though they do not know it, are blockading my main port—where, just now, all of my force is assembled. I must refit somewhere; and here was my best chance. I shall pass as a Spanish privateer, which has been in action with a Mexican man-of-war; and, with your aid, the matter can be carried out very easily."

"And you expect me to aid you in this deception?"

"I do not only expect it, but I demand it; and you dare not refuse me!"

"I dare!—if it costs my life, I dare!" said De Regla, taunted into desperation.

"The future Governor-General of Cuba—perhaps Prime-Minister of Spain—forgot himself!" said the pirate, sarcastically; "and perhaps he also forgets certain bonds for government monies squandered, which are held as a safe-guard by one who never trusted him beyond the length of a chain-cable!"

The marquis groaned: he knew he was in the power of that bold, bad man, and he did not indeed dare to thwart his will.

"If I consent, you will hasten your departure, will you not?" he asked, at last.

"Of course I will, if you are reasonable. I have no desire to tarry long in port—I have too much work ahead. But I shall depend on you to answer the demands of my officers; for I must go down by the overland route and see my men. If you have a message to your daughter, I will bear it."

"I would rather you would bring her here!" said the marquis, sadly. "Here she will be safe—and you know not how dear to me she is. I did not know, until her absence told me!"

"She shall come here only after she is my bride!" replied the pirate. "When these Yankees have been driven off, and she is mine, you shall see her decked and jeweled as a queen!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"I have never counted hours—minutes—before! Days I may have noted: heeded months; but I have never felt that every second was an age! O Heaven! how must time drag to those who are bound for weary years within a dungeon's walls! He or she were more than a coward who would endure it, and possess the means of death within their reach. I have been here for but a day or two—a few hours, and yet am miserable. Why does he not come, that I may know my fate at once?"

The sound of footsteps interrupted this wild soliloquy; and Mariana, who uttered it, turned toward the door of her glittering prison—well knowing, by the hasty, heavy tread, who was approaching. A moment more, and he entered, armed as he had been when he last stood in the presence of Garcia de Regla, but now covered with the dusty stains of hasty travel.

"Well, lady, I have brought you a message from your father," said Colcefrinas, not recognizing the change of persons as he entered the lighted room. "I hope you will be thankful for it, and not attempt to carry your head quite so high as you did when last I met you!"

"I have dreamed that my father slept in a bloody grave!" said Mariano, in the tone which he had heard from Mariano's lips a thousand times—a tone not quite so rich, but a thousand times more deep and thrilling than that of ordinary women.

The pirate sprung forward and caught her by the arm, looked at her fiercely for a moment, and then cried:

"How dare you, sir, to masquerade with me! I have allowed you too much liberty hitherto! It shall be lessened materially. Where is the lady?"

"I am the only lady here," was the reply, given in so low and sweet a tone, with downcast eyes and a blush so natural, that Colcefrinas felt for an instant inclined to believe that a woman indeed stood before him; but this he could not, for Mariano had from childhood served him, and he had never doubted that he was a boy.

"A woman, with all of a woman's heart ex-

cept her fears!" continued Mariano. And she drew her proud form up, and looked so much like what her mother had been when first she attracted his passion, that he released her arm and drew back.

"You act well. But have done with this mummery; I am not in a humor to be trifled with now, sir!" said the pirate. "Where is the lady Maraquita, whom I left here?"

"That is more than I can tell: she is not here. When I came she went away."

"Villain! have you aided her to escape?" cried the chief, trembling with anger.

"I exchanged garments with her, and she is free."

"Curse you—you shall die for this!" shouted Colcefrinas, as he drew a pistol from his belt.

"Fire!" cried the excited girl, as she boldly tore open the silken robes, and revealed a spotless bosom, which all too well proclaimed her sex. "Fire! and pierce a heart which for years, in silence and sorrow, has throbbed only for you—dark, dark and sinful though it has been! Why do you not fire?"

The hand of Colcefrinas fell powerless to his side.

"What does this mean?" he asked, trembling. "Is it a miracle? You are not the Mariano who for years have been near me—the Mariano whom I found but a mere child with its mother?"

"I am that child! For reasons of her own, which she may explain, but I cannot, my mother has ever made me conceal my sex until now; and now, that it is revealed, I am Mariano no longer, but MARIANA—and still your slave!"

And tearfully, timidly, she knelt, and took his hand and kissed it.

"So your mother is at the bottom of all this!" he said, thoughtfully. And then he turned upon his heel and left the room; while she still remained kneeling.

She rose a moment after, and rushed to the door to follow him: it was barred, and she yet remained a prisoner. With a low cry of anguish, she turned back; and, casting herself down upon the carpet-covered ground, sobbed and wept as if her heart would break. She was indeed a woman now.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The queenly manner, as well as the rare beauty of Monona, gave her much power among the lawless followers of Colcefrinas; and regarding her as his wife, and one devoted to him and his interests, in his absence they were in the habit of obeying her commands, and in times of threatened peril of seeking her advice. When he had sailed in the captured schooner on his last trip, he had told her, as well as his followers, that if he was successful, he would be back in five days, and then would lead them against the rest of their blockading foes. But the five days, and even more time had elapsed, and he had not returned, though the spies had seen the Alligator come back to her anchorage with the marks of a severe conflict visible in her hull and among her spars. The excitement of the entire band of pirates was now intense; for so far as such lawless men could feel, they felt attached to their leader. He was, indeed, their ruling spirit. He had led them ever on to victory with a lion's courage; and when danger had environed, had drawn them from its meshes with a cunning brain and a skillful hand. They felt that if he was lost, they, too, must follow—for in him alone had they full confidence. Others there were as brave, but none so fitted for command.

Upon Monona they now called; for the universal wish of all was, to sally out and attack the American vessels in the night, carry them by surprise, and then to look for him. But too glad to have a chance to win their esteem, and to gain power amongst them (for she knew not how soon she might need it), Monona—who had, as we have seen already, sent Maraquita out of her way in a boat, manned by men whom she had contrived long before to win completely into her own service—at once acceded to their wishes.

"Arm yourselves, my brave free rovers, and you shall be led to victory by the wife of your chief. If I am not as strong of arm as he," she cried, "his heart is not more fearless than I; and none of you will shrink to follow where a woman leads!"

This announcement was received with many a thundering cheer from the men; and hastening to arm themselves and prepare their boats,

they swore to follow her to death, if it were there she led them.

They had gathered together, ready for embarkation. And when Monona, dressed more like a Grecian warrior than a woman, and armed with sword, dagger, and pistols, made her appearance in their front, they received her with boisterous cries of gladness.

But suddenly there was a hush; and as Colcefrinas himself appeared, and with a stern face confronted them, they were silent from surprise. For they had expected him from seaward, and he had come from the direction of the mountains.

"What means this wild hurrahing?" he asked, sternly. "Who commands here?"

"Colcefrinas does now—but I should have done so, when fearing that he was slain, we were about to go and avenge him, and drive the Yankees from our coast, or slay them where they lurk! Who has a better right than your wife?" was the proud reply of Monona.

"Woman, your place is in the house! Go there—I have some business to settle there with you directly."

Monona's dark eyes flashed, for he spoke in a tone of scornful anger; and for a moment a bitter reply trembled upon her lips. But her better judgment prevailed. She knew that a storm must come, and she preferred to brave him alone rather than before the men. So, with an air as of one deeply pained, which she well knew would excite sympathy for her, she turned away and re-entered her residence.

"Men! retire to your quarters! When I need your services, you will be called!"

These were all the words Colcefrinas uttered; and the men were so used to obedience, that they obeyed instantly. But there were many who were not well pleased with so curt a dismissal—thinking at least that they should have heard of the result of his recent cruise, and the fate of those who had gone with him. But he was not in a humor to seek to please any one, much less to care whether he did or not. He did not even appear to notice their looks of discontent, though little was there ever to be seen which escaped his observation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Well, sir—you said you had business to settle with me here—I am ready for the settlement," said Monona, when Colcefrinas entered her room.

She had neither laid aside her weapons, nor the haughty look which so well became them.

"Where is Maraquita de Regla?" he asked, fiercely.

"Do you ask of that of one whom you widowed to make her your own—one whom you have sworn was the mistress of your heart and the partner of your fortunes, were they bright or dark?"

"Where is Maraquita de Regla?" he thundered.

"What is she or should be to you?"

"For the third and last time, I ask you, Where is Maraquita de Regla?"

"What will you do if I do not answer?"

"Cut the tongue off that refuses to reply to my bidding!"

"That were a dangerous experiment to try just now, Eduardo! You see that I am armed as well as yourself. And my mood is none too amiable, while I feel that I am wronged by him who should be the last on earth to add to wrongs which I should never have either forgiven or forgotten—wrongs which may yet be avenged, for while life lasts it is not too late."

Colcefrinas withdrew his hand from the dagger's hilt where he had placed it. For hers was upon a pistol, and he saw that in her fiery glance which told him but too plainly, a motion on his part would induce her to use the weapon.

"Monona," said he, more gently after a pause, "you are acting unwomanlike and foolish!"

"Unwomanlike, perhaps—but not with folly," she replied. "Unwomanlike, because I do not bow my head in tears and submit to the deepest wrong which a woman can endure—to be supplanted by another. Unwomanlike, because I dare to look with bitterness on the past, and to determine to right myself when my only protector rises to wrong me. Or do you mean that I was unwomanly when I armed to lead your men against your foes, and avenge your loss—if lost you were, as they feared and I almost hoped!"

"Hoped, Monona—hoped I was lost?"

"Yes, Eduardo—yes, better the loss of your life and mine, than to be awakened thus rudely from the dream of love which has made me so happy."

And Monona's voice began to tremble and her eyes to moisten. Colcefrinas saw that the woman-nature was struggling to come back, and with wily art he threw out a decoy to bring it further.

"You have not lost my love, Monona!" said he.

"Why, then, did you seek to wed this De Regla's child?"

"I did not mean to wed her. I held her as a hostage for her father's faith, for I had reason to doubt that; and if we have no hold on the government officials, our homes here would soon be too hot to hold us. Besides, there would be no market for our plunder, were not they our friends."

"You need not try to deceive me, Eduardo. I have known your movements too long."

"You do well to talk of deceit, madam, who have deceived me so long, and kept your daughter as a spy upon my motions."

"If you term that deceit by which I have concealed her sex, I am willing to bear the blame of it. So far I have preserved her from the wrong which has wrapped me in shame; and I hope I have given her a courage to prefer death to dishonor."

A new thought—a new means to subdue the tigress temper before him, suddenly flashed, as all things had come, upon his mind.

"Do not think that I regret to have discovered your secret, or rather to have learned the sex of your child. She is very pretty—very like what you once were," said he, and a quiet smile stole over his cold face.

Not now the jealous fears of a woman, but all of a mother's nature was aroused, and Monona, pale as marble, threw herself at his feet.

"Oh! for the love of Heaven! do not hint that she—she, my child, will suffer wrong at your hands! I know that no priestly lips have ever pronounced the nuptial benediction for us—but oh! have we not been as man and wife in the sight of Heaven for long, long years? Eduardo—Eduardo! speak! You do not contemplate this dreadful wrong?"

"Where is Maraquita de Regla?" he softly asked, for he felt that Monona now would not refuse an answer.

"She has gone on board of the American schooner, at anchor off the coast," echoed the woman.

"Ten thousand curses on you! Have you given her up to him—to my deadliest foe? Shall he conquer me in everything? Off, woman! cling not to me now—off!"

And he cast her from him with a force that left her stunned and senseless on the floor. He did not pause to look at her, but sternly strode from the house. Meeting his principal officer, he asked:

"What was the plan of the expedition which you were about to undertake when I returned, Solano?"

"A night attack upon the Yankees in Tortuga Bay, my chief. There are but three vessels; and if we took them unawares, we could kill every man or run them overboard!"

"That is so. I have left the schooner in a friendly port to refit, and I would have liked to have had her crew in the fray. But it matters not; we have men enough, and the attack must be made in boats. Muster our forces at once, and tell them that we will take those Yankees this night, for I will lead the expedition!"

"Ay, ay, sir! It will be the best news they've heard in a year. How soon will we start, sir?"

"It will be dark within an hour—let all things be prepared within two. That will give us time to board them when they sleep the soundest in the mid-watch! Let the oars be muffled, and none but able men allowed to take an oar. This time we fight for safety and for revenge, not for profit."

The officer hurried away to obey the orders of his chief, and the latter returned into his house, for he had met the officer beneath the window, and but a step from the door.

As he passed through the room where he had left poor Monona, he looked upon the floor, but she was not there. She had recovered sufficiently to go from there. He went into the room where he usually sat, and where a sideboard was placed, upon which stood decanters of wine, brandy, etc. Of the last he took a brimming goblet, muttering as he drank: "I will have her yet! His life or mine this time."

"Where is your mistress, Lisa?" he asked of a servant, who entered.

"She has just gone into her chamber, señor!" replied the negress.

"It is well! That is the best place for her," muttered the fierce man. And he went into his armory to prepare himself better for the evening's work.

CHAPTER XXXV.

By good fortune Allen had several trunks of clothing on board, which had been taken from a vessel partially robbed, and deserted by pirates; and in a short time, by the aid of these, the lady Maraquita was enabled to robe herself in a manner becoming her sex. He was then less delicate about introducing her to his officers than he would have been had she been forced to appear in her male attire. And he wished to introduce her; for he deemed it necessary to call a council of the chief officers of the little squadron together, and to give them information of the evident vicinity of a large rendezvous of the pirates, as was proven by her recent adventure.

The council was held; and it was there determined on the morrow to start a large boat-expedition, which was narrowly to search every portion of the adjacent coast, and to penetrate any inlets, bays, or rivers which they might find. As it was evident, too, that there was danger of a surprise when a large body of men were so near, additional look-outs were ordered, and it was agreed to hoist the boarding nettings after dark, and adopt other usual precautions. As the vessels lay anchored almost head and stern in a line in the narrow bay, their defence if attacked would be united, while it would extend the attacking force. The precautions were taken not because the Americans believed the pirates would really have the audacity to attack an armed force, but because it was their duty to provide against its possibility rather than its probability.

The night was dark; had it been moonlight, Allen would have doubtless asked the lady of his love to promenade the deck, now deserted by all but the officer of the watch and the usual anchor-guard—for in no climate in the world are moonlight promenades more delicious than in that flowery land. As it was, though, the hours flew on uncounted until after the midnight watch had been changed, Allen and Maraquita remained in the after-cabin of the schooner, conversing, for neither felt like parting, even for slumber.

Suddenly the hail of a sentinel was heard, shouting, boat ahoy!"

An answer was given in Spanish, and Allen hurried to the deck, for he felt almost intuitively that it must be something serious to bring a boat on board at that time of night.

On a second hail, asking where the boat was from, and what she wanted, at the same time warning her not to approach without permission was granted, a female voice replied:

"We come to save you from surprise and destruction! For your own sakes let me see your commander, instantly!"

Allen gave the order, and in a few moments the boat was alongside, and he assisted a female over the side, whose form was concealed as well as sheltered from the night air by a large cloak.

"Which is your captain? let me see him alone, instantly!" she said.

"Come into the cabin, madam!" said the young officer. Then bidding the officer of the deck detain the boat in which she came until further orders, he preceded her into that apartment.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing, and what may the news be you have to impart?" asked Allen, as he motioned the stranger to a seat.

"That lady knows I am—I was—the slave of Colcefrinas, until his treachery and brutal treatment forced me to desperation and revenge. At the risk of my life I have come from his rendezvous with a faithful boat's crew, who are sworn to my service. He will attack your vessels within an hour, with at least one thousand men, hoping to take you utterly by surprise. If you repulse him you shall see me again—if you slay him, and will let me have enough to make me and my child independent in some far off land where we are unknown, and guarantee us protection until we are free from this region, I will disclose the hiding-place of his treasures. Now let me go, for I must return and avoid his boats, or I am lost!"

"Can I trust in what this lady says?" asked Allen of Maraquita.

"I think you can. Her hand gave me my freedom!" said the señorita.

"Lady, would you not be safer to remain here?" he asked of Monona. "Thus forewarned, we can easily repulse those who attack us, and afterward I can better serve you, perhaps!"

"I prefer to return, señor—my child may be in danger; for she is yet a prisoner, in place of this lady!"

"It shall be as you wish. And you have my thanks for this warning!"

"I need no thanks, señor! I avenge myself in warning you. But, beware, he is even now near!"

She waited no longer, but was gone in a moment. Allen saw her over the side, and then hastened to send word to his colleagues to prepare for the impending attack, and himself superintended the necessary operations. The broadsides of the vessels were sprung so as to completely cover the entrance of the bay—the guns were depressed so as to sweep the surface of the water within pistol-shot—they were loaded to the muzzle with grape-shot and bags of musket-balls—all of the small-arms were changed, and the crews of the guns stationed. All the lights, except those usually shown by vessels at anchor, were put out, and the strictest silence enjoined, so that those who intended to surprise might believe in their success until it was time to turn the tables on them.

The men and officers had been at their stations an hour at least—it seemed longer, for suspense hangs weights to the wings of Time—and as yet no sound of the expected enemy was heard.

"I shouldn't wonder if that woman had deceived us, and had only come as a spy to see whether we were prepared or not!" said his first lieutenant to Allen, as the latter leaned against the quarter-rail in a listening attitude.

"Hush—I hear the low dip of oars! Be ready to throw up the blue lights the moment I give the word!" was Allen's low reply.

To other ears than those of one who watched anxiously with the hope of fame in his heart, the sounds would have been inaudible, but soon they became so distinct that at almost the same moment the look-outs of the three vessels hailed.

At that instant, a shower of rockets and blue lights thrown up from Allen's vessel lighted the little bay up with the glare of day, showing its entrance filled with boats which were stealthily pulling toward the vessels—boats crowded with armed men.

Hitherto they had been silent as death, but now, seeing that they were discovered, with wild yells and maddening shouts they dashed toward the vessels.

The guns scarce needed sighting; and in a minute, with one terrific sheet of fire—one earth-and-ocean-shaking sound, the united broadsides sent their freight of iron and lead among the miserable wretches. While yet the wild echoes rolled from isle to isle, the crash of splintered boats, the shrieks of dying men, and the bubbling groans of drowning ones rent the air. The havoc was terrible, yet it did not utterly check the onslaught of those terrible men. More boats were crowding into the bay, and these, with those which had escaped the first dreadful fire, still dashed on with a bravery worthy of a better cause.

But to load and fire, with great guns and small, from their yet bloodless decks was an easy affair for the Americans, and they poured in a fire so deadly, that but a few boats came near enough to attempt to board.

Colcefrinas, who had led in a small, swift rowing gig manned by but half a dozen men, shouted his war-cry all in vain—though escaping every shot, as if by magic, he dashed to and fro, and sought to urge his followers into line and on to the attack, he could not rally them beyond a second attack, and then at last, with the loss of at least two-thirds of his band, when he was wounded badly in three different places, he sullenly gave the order to retire.

The action had lasted but a few minutes, and the Americans had not a man killed, and but a few wounded by the random shots which had reached them. It was almost a bloodless victory on their part. Allen was in ecstasies; and though he sent out boats to pick up such wounded wretches as would accept quarter, and to destroy those who had swam to the islands, and yet resisted, or sought to escape, he scarcely desired to spare one of them.

"It's strange that they should want to be saved from drowning, or a more decent one of bladin' to death, when they're sure to be hung if they live!" muttered the doctor, while he

dressed the wounds of a pirate who was clinging to life with tenacity.

The attack was made some three hours before daylight, or thereabouts yet the boats' crews of the vessels were kept busy until daylight in picking up wounded men, while the rest still kept careful guard on board, lest with reinforcements the pirates might be so desperate as to attempt to renew the attack. But they did not—their loss had been too great for that.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

When Colcefrinas was borne into his chamber, at the rendezvous, by some of his now-disheartened men, Monona, with mock-sympathy upon her lips and in her face, was the first to tender her assistance—for she had returned undiscovered, and none but those who were in the secret knew. Groaning more with bitterness of heart than with the pain of his wounds, Colcefrinas bade her leave him, rudely refusing her assistance. And as soon as his surgeon had attended to his wounds, he ordered a council of his chief officers to assemble.

"There has been treason at work somewhere among ourselves!" said he. "If the Yankees had not been forewarned of our intended attack, they could not have been so completely prepared. They were at their guns, and the guns loaded expressly for an attack, and their lights and rockets ready to throw their glare upon us! It is evident that there must be some one among us who is false!"

The others assented to this—but to discover the traitor or traitors was the thing to be accomplished.

"Who among you will desert me?" asked the wounded pirate.

"Not one—we will die with you, but never desert you!" was the unanimous reply.

The chief smiled a ghastly smile, for he was suffering all the while.

"I had expected this devotion!" he said. But you do not understand me. I want a volunteer who will desert—under a flag of truce deliver himself into the hands of the Yankees, and under the pledge of pardon and protection, agree to act as a pilot for them. He can gain their confidence by leading them to some of our long-shore boat-stations, from which our men, forewarned, may escape to the hills, and he can discover who the traitor is that has been so nearly our ruin, and who will be our destruction, without he is discovered and punished! Who now will volunteer to do this work?"

No one responded! It was dangerous; for, once on board the American vessels, and treachery there would be sure to meet the rope! Open danger none of them would have shunned. Each man was willing to fight to the last gasp, but none of them liked the idea of wearing a hempen cravat. Few men do. There would be a thousand murders a day were it not for the wholesome fear of that uncomfortable article. And yet some mawkish philanthropists, with more sympathy for the murderers than their victims, would have its use abolished! A little rope among them would benefit the world in general, I believe.

"I will not send any one, for the duty is as unpleasant as it is full of risk!" said Colcefrinas.

And then his face brightened, as a new idea seemed to strike him. He dismissed all of his officers, except two in whom he confided more than all the rest. To one he said: "You will see that the lady Monona is, during the rest of the day and night, confined strictly to her chamber. Let her have communication with no one outside. To-morrow, I care not where she goes!"

To the other he confided a message in a whisper, only adding, at the close, in a louder tone, "If she consents, bring her here quickly—if not, let her remain until I will it otherwise!"

The officer bowed and hurried away, while his comrade went for a guard to carry out the other order of his chief.

This plan will work, I think, muttered the chief, and exhausted with his exertions, he sunk back upon his couch to rest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mariana, left hopeless by the sudden departure of Colcefrinas, pined even more rapidly than did poor Maraquita, when she had no hope of relief before her, and feared a fate more dreadful than death. Her heart had not

been schooled to reverses, and her nature taught to bend and yield, rather than to resist and break. Ah! this is a hard world to learn, and one is apt to die just when he has got fairly schooled in its bitter lessons.

Mariana sat moody and listless in the splendor of her prison, when again the sound of footsteps fell upon her ear, and she heard the door unbarred. But she did not raise her bowed head from the table whereon it rested, for she knew that they were not *his* footsteps which she heard—that he was not the one who approached.

"I bear a message from Colcefrinas to Mariana!" said the person who stood before her.

She knew the voice, and quickly raised her great black eyes, and anxiously scanned his face, as if she would read there his tidings before he spoke them.

"You know me?" said the officer.

"I do, Solano—I do! What message did he send to me?"

"He is sorely wounded, or he would have come himself; but he bade me ask you, if he gave you freedom, would you swear to render honestly to him and the band a most important service!"

"I would die for him! I never have been unfaithful to him, but in aiding the release of the poor girl whom he kept here so lonely against her will. He is noble, too noble to war against women, or to try to force them love! Love is a thing which grows—slowly, but ah! how deep it roots. Go to him and tell him, that he may command my every breath in life. I would lose each drop of blood in my veins, drop by drop, in his service! I ask no freedom but to serve him. Go to him, good Solano, go to him, and tell him this!"

"My instructions were, if I found you willing, to take you with me into his presence!"

"Oh joy! I am ready this instant to go. But shall I not go in the garments I used to wear?"

"No, lady—if I judge aright, you will be his page no longer!" said the officer. "And the garments you now wear become you too much for any one to wish to see you in any other!"

Mariana made no objections. She was but too glad to leave her prison—too glad to go to him for whom she felt a love as wild and deep as it was strange and unnatural.

She stood by his side, blushing and trembling like a child in the presence of a god! He, still faint and weak from the loss of blood, was also pale, but he never had looked so noble in her eyes, for he spoke very gently and kindly.

"These Yankees have been too much for us, Mariana!" said he. "And they will yet destroy us all if we do not soon turn the tables on them. Solano says that you are willing to serve me!"

"With my life, my lord—you have but to command, and I will obey!"

"Some one among us has been playing the traitor. The Yankees have been made acquainted with our intended movements; and it is only wonderful to me that the traitor, whoever it be, has not revealed our place of rendezvous. But that satisfies me that he is yet among us, probably has a family here, and has not yet prepared to finish all his work of treachery. It is necessary to find out who he is, and to mislead the Yankees until we can take them at an advantage!"

"You wish me to go?"

"Yes, Mariana; for I feel that I can trust you, and when you tell them that you have escaped from your prison, they will believe you—for the lady Maraquita is on board of Allen's vessel, and will confirm your statements!"

"She there? Do you wish to secure her again?" asked Mariana, with an eagerness which betrayed her feelings.

"No," said Colcefrinas, with an air of carelessness which at once disarmed Mariana of all her jealous thoughts. "I do not care to rob the Yankee of his worthless treasure. But I will have his life, or drive him and his confederates away from the coast. That done, we could seek a more quiet home in some other land, but now, they even cut off our only path of retreat. Can you do me this service, Mariana?"

"I can and will, faithfully, if I lose my life in carrying out your wishes. I have no desire but to serve you, no wish but to live and die near you!"

"We will never be long separated, Mariana!"

said the wily pirate. "If we but succeed in driving these pests away, I intend to gather together my treasure, and to go far, far from here. I have seen enough of peril and of bloodshed! Your young days have been dark ones, in future you shall see sunshine!"

The impassioned girl knelt by his bedside, and covered his hands with glad tears and kisses.

It seemed strange, even to Colcefrinas, that during all this time she did not ask for her mother. But she seemed to have but one thought—one feeling—to know of, or to care to know of, but one being on earth.

"When shall I go, my master?" she asked, as she arose to her feet.

"As soon as night mantles the sky, my love. Take my own light skiff, which I will have prepared for you. You will easily find the Americans. They are at anchor in Tortuga Bay. When you have learned all you can, and found out who it is that has betrayed us, hasten to my side. They will not watch you, and escape will be easy. In the meantime, do not speak to a soul here. Your mother is in her apartment, and not very well. But I do not wish her to know that you are here!"

"If my master will permit, I will remain by his side until it is time for me to start!"

"You surely shall have your wish, my good Mariana! How strange that I should not have discovered your sex before! You are very, very beautiful!"

So well was the entrance to the rendezvous of the pirates concealed, that the boats of the American expedition rowed by within less than two hundred yards of it, and did not discover it, on the day after their successful repulse of the pirates. And though they hunted up and down the coast for some leagues to the eastward and westward of their anchorage, they discovered nothing of note.

When Allen returned to his vessel at night, he was weary and disappointed, for he had felt confident that he would discover the main nest of the gang, and completely break them up. But he found a visitor who brought to him news that was far from unimportant. It was none other than the American Consul from Matanzas, in person, who came to describe the suspicious-looking schooner which was refitting in that port as a Spanish privateer, and which he believed to be a pirate.

From the consul's description, Allen had no doubt but that she was his late antagonist, and his first thought was to sail at once and capture her. But he knew that Colcefrinas was not in her, for he had recognized him in the night attack, and hoped that he was slain, for twice, with an almost unerring rifle, he had fired at him, as he believed, with good aim. The consul had also learned that near a week would pass before the schooner would be ready for sea, and Allen, therefore, determined to spend a day or two more in his search for the pirates, for he knew that they must be somewhere near. While he was conversing with the consul and Maraquita, a messenger from the officer of the deck announced that a boat with a single person, and that a woman, had come alongside, not having been seen until she was within a few feet of the gangway.

"If so poor a watch is kept as that, we are never safe from surprise!" said Allen, angrily. "Have the woman brought into the cabin, and double the watch. It is doubtless the same who forewarned us of the night attack. She promised to return."

When the messenger returned, bringing Mariana instead of her mother, Allen was greatly surprised, and Maraquita uttering a cry of joy, hastened to embrace her, for she felt that to her, principally, she owed her freedom. Hurried inquiries were made, and replies given, between the two females, by which Allen learned that Mariana, fearing that Colcefrinas would slay her, had escaped, and fled to his vessel for protection. She had not seen her mother, but had heard of the night-attack, and that Colcefrinas was badly wounded.

And to her utter astonishment, Mariana now learned that her mother had been the one who had warned the Americans of the intended attack—to her agony we may add, for she had sworn to Colcefrinas that she would find out and reveal the traitor, whoever it might be. She knew how wild and jealous was her mother's disposition, but she had not dreamed that it would lead her to be false to those with whom she had dwelt so many years, and to him whom she had so wildly loved.

It must be remembered that Mariana, reared from childhood amongst these des-

perate people, did not look upon piracy as a crime, and regard it with an eye of horror, but thought more of it as an honorable warfare, in which all that was taken was a prize to the victor. Was not all the world against her people, and were they not right to prey upon the world? She thought so, and knew no better. Who could blame her?

After hearing all that Mariana had to say about her escape, and also of the damage which the pirate had sustained in the night-attack, Allen began gently to ask how the pirates were situated.

Mariana now had her most difficult task to perform. Womanlike she appeared to fear to attempt to pilot the Americans to the stronghold of the pirates, and she also said they had several. And she so greatly exaggerated their numbers, that Allen believing all she said, felt that it would be folly with his force to attack them in a body, but he hoped to separate them and cut them off in detail, prevent their marauding excursions, and finally to harass them into leaving those waters forever, or else utterly to destroy them. And he forebore that evening to push his inquiries or requests further, and left Maraquita and Mariana to themselves, with the true delicacy of a gentleman.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"I am truly obliged to your serene highness for permission once more to stand in your presence," said Monona, mockingly, to Colcefrinas, when, after finding the guard removed from her door, she had ventured from her chamber to that in which he lay.

"I did not want to be annoyed by your false sympathies, until I found that my wounds were not of a serious nature, and my recovery likely to be retarded by a woman who no longer loves me!" said he.

"And whom you never loved, you might as well have added."

"You can have it so if it pleases you, madam."

"I will. I am sorry that you are likely to recover; there will be one person greatly disappointed by it."

"Yourself, I presume?"

"No, sir; yet another!"

"May I ask who?"

"Certainly: his Satanic Majesty, whose prime-minister you are on earth. He needs you below, where promotion awaits you!"

"Your endeavors to be facetious are very amusing, madam."

"Do they annoy you, sir?"

"Not at all, madam: you may continue."

"Not if it pleases you. How can I annoy you?"

"By cutting your own throat."

"That I shall not do until I have seen Colcefrinas hanged. It will take a strong rope to hold you, sin is heavy!"

"A chain cable would scarcely sustain your weight, madam."

"A chain of gold will, when I am your widow and heiress to your ill-gotten wealth."

"When you are, madam, may I roast!"

"Doubtless, you will be roasting about that time. You ought to follow the example of your illustrious prototype, Blue Beard. He used to kindle a fire of brimstone in his hold, and go down there to see how long he could stand it. With your prospects before you, you should harden yourself to sulphureous flames as soon as possible."

"I will, madam, if you will bear me company."

"Ah! I see your old passion is returning. You really wish to have me by your side again!"

"Yes, if it is to suffer!"

"Well, I regret that I cannot oblige you. If you have no objections, I will take a walk in the fresh air. I am sorry the Yankees have so disabled you that I cannot have the pleasure of your company—very sorry! Should I see a better-looking man, I may ask him to escort me."

"As you please, madam; no folly of yours can now anger me—no act of yours injure me. I hate you now as bitterly as I once loved you warmly. Were you not a woman, I would feed the sharks with your carcase. As it is, I despise you."

The eyes of the fierce, hating woman fairly blazed with anger.

"Eduardo Colcefrinas," she hissed, "you may hate me—I care not for that; but, by the living God! you shall find that I am not to be despised!"

"What do you mean, my gentle-tempered love?" asked he, with a sneer.

"That if you know when you are well off, you will give me and my child gold enough to live in comfort in some land far away from the contaminating atmosphere where you dwell, and let us depart at once."

"You are modest in your demands. I will give you gold, and let you go, out of pity; but your daughter loves me too well to leave me. She will gladly remain in your place."

"Monster, you lie! She loves you not!"

"You had better ask her. If she will go with you, you both are free to go."

"If you have any honor left, will you say that on your honor?"

"If I have any honor left, I renew the promise on my honor, madam."

"Colcefrinas, I will take you at your word; for I will not believe you to be so quite lost to self-respect as to basely deceive me where you have passed your word. I will see her; and if she says she loves you—if she dares—"

The mother gasped: she could not utter the horrible thought.

"Well, madam, if she does—what then?"

"I will drive a dagger to its hilt in her heart and my own!" cried the woman, raising her voice almost to a shriek, and clenching her hands together, until the nails sunk deep into the palms and the red blood gushed from beneath them. "I will see her! I will see her!" she cried. And, trembling with excitement, she left the house.

"If you find her!" muttered the pirate, glad that she was gone; for the excitement had been too much for him. He was so weakened, that he was obliged to summon a servant to give him a stimulating draught.

CHAPTER XL.

It seemed strange; but Allen had consented to the request, strange as it was, of Mariana, that if her mother came off from the shore, she was to be kept concealed from her; nor was her mother to be informed of her escape. The reason she gave for this was, that her mother was of a variable and fickle nature, and in her anger so careless, that she might betray her whereabouts to Colcefrinas; and Mariana seemed to fear him as if he were some demon possessed of more than mortal power.

And well for Mariana's plans was it that she had made this request; for, on the evening following that of her arrival on board, her mother came as before; and this time for the purpose of betraying the pirate-chieftain in his stronghold. She brought to Allen a drawing of the rendezvous bay, and a chart of the entrance, drawn with her own hand; but she did not disclose the hiding-place of the treasure—determined, probably, to keep that knowledge for her own benefit, for the time, at least.

Mariana, from a state-room close at hand, heard all this; and she could scarcely conceal her feelings from Maraquita, who remained with her. It may be imagined that, with her own feelings for Colcefrinas, she had not loved her mother very deeply before; but now she felt for her no feeling of affection, and only wanted a chance to escape from the vessel, and expose her in time to save her chief and his band from the effects of her betrayal.

With almost tremulous eagerness, she heard her mother agree to have a small beacon-light placed outside the entrance to the bay of rendezvous on the next night, and thus to aid the Americans in their descent upon the band. In regard to the numbers of the enemy and their condition, her statement and that of her mother did not agree; but Allen did not think of studying discrepancies. So entirely was he bound up in the duty upon which he and his brave colleagues had been sent, that he did not feel inclined to ask how many he was to meet: his greatest desire was, to know where they were.

He got the consul to go back to watch the movements of De Regla and the schooner in Matanzas—promising to follow or send a vessel to capture her after he had attended to the case of the pirates at their head-quarters; then holding a council with the other officers, he made them acquainted with the rare good news he had received; and the evening was spent in joyous anticipation of a livelier night to ensue.

Perhaps no men enjoy, proportionately with the hardships which they must suffer, life as do our naval officers; none can better appreciate a social hour than they. Guarded against dissipation by a stern and severe discipline,

they can yet enjoy their friendly glass of wine, or more fraternal glass of "grog," and a fragrant cigar; and when in a "knot," can spin their "yarns" with a gusto that cannot well be described or appreciated, except by one of themselves or one who has been of them—as is the case with him who pens these lines.

And on this occasion—the honors of the "mess" being duly performed by Allen, some excellent punch brewed, and other indispensables passed around—the officers of the little fleet enjoyed themselves until a late hour. They had not much fear of another night attack: the last had probably taken a desire for nocturnal combats out of the main body of the pirates. It was late when Allen's guests left him, and he retired at once; for Monona had gone back to the shore long before, and his other guests had gone to their state-rooms at an early hour.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Where is Mariana?" asked Allen, on the ensuing morning, of Maraquita, as the latter came from her state-room, looking as fresh as a magnolia tinged with the morning sunlight. "We wait breakfast now for her."

"I will see," replied the young lady, "if she is dressed."

She went to her state-room and knocked, but received no response. She tried the door; and, it being unfastened, she opened it and looked in. Mariana was not there. Maraquita's exclamation of surprise drew Allen instantly to her side.

"Not here!" he exclaimed, in wonder. "Where can she be?"

And instantly search was made in all other parts of the vessel where she could have gone; for he thought she might have risen early and gone to promenade on deck. But she was not to be found; and on examination, it was discovered that the small skiff in which she came, which had been fastened astern, was also missing.

Maraquita now bethought her how agitated Mariana had been when they both heard Monona telling Allen about Colcefrinas and his position, and told Allen of it.

"I see through the matter now!" said the latter. "Mariana has been sent here as a spy—she has been to us with falsehood on her lips and treachery in her heart!"

"I cannot believe it!" responded Maraquita. "She was the only one who was kind to me when I was in his power: her mother, even when she helped me to my freedom, was stern and harsh. There is some mystery in this; but I cannot believe that Mariana came as a spy!"

"We will see. I shall learn, before midnight, if my conjectures are right; for if she has been here as a spy, and discovered her mother's treachery to the band, Colcefrinas will know it, and be on his guard."

"Even if it were so, she would not betray her mother to his terrible anger!"

"It would not seem natural that she should—but crime, or an association with criminals, hardens every nature. There is no imagining what she would or would not do. But this must not spoil our appetites: to breakfast, fair lady mine—to breakfast!"

They had but just taken seats at the table, when a message from the officer of the deck announced a boat coming into the bay, with an English flag flying over her stern-sheets.

The face of Allen flushed with pleasure as he received the message.

"If any of the English fleet are outside," said he, "they will gladly co-operate with us, and our force will be so strengthened that no position or defence of the pirates will avail them. If there is an officer in the English boat, let him be invited to breakfast with me," he added, to the messenger.

"There are two, sir," said the latter: "I saw them before I came below."

"Very well. Steward, place two more plates here, and let the cook do his duty. These Englishmen live by eating! They're in a good humor only when their bread-baskets are full."

Maraquita smiled at this idea, for it seemed singular that one's good-nature should depend on his feeding.

But she had not time to make any remarks, if any suggested themselves to her, for two officers were ushered into the cabin. Both wore the crown-and-anchor button of the royal navy; but one was dressed in a black frock coat, and wore the spotless cravat of white, which told that he was a chaplain in the serv-

ice. The first—a fine-looking man, of not more than thirty—introduced himself as Lord Seymour, captain of the frigate *Medusa*, and introduced the other as Mr. Mordaunt, the chaplain of his ship.

Both gentlemen accepted the invitation to breakfast without hesitation: a morning's row from the frigate, which lay in the roads, five or six miles off, had given them an appetite. And Allen's appetite seemed to increase—for a new and happy thought had entered his mind the moment that he saw the clerical rig of the chaplain. What it was, none but a diabolical old bachelor, or a wretched ancient maiden, will have or take occasion to inquire. And as his eyes met those of Maraquita, and glanced thence toward the chaplain, a blush on her lovely cheek told that she read the first wish of his heart—a blush of joy; for though she was modest and pure as a child, yet she was too artless to conceal her warm heart's feelings.

While they were at breakfast, Allen, without hesitation, revealed his knowledge of the pirates and their position, and his intention of attacking them; and asked the co-operation of Lord Seymour and as many of his crew as he could spare. The latter assented readily:

"'Twill be a jolly bit of fun, no doubt," said he. "Parson, you'd as readily take a hand in it as you would a game of whist, wouldn't you?" he added, addressing the chaplain.

"More readily!" said Mr. Mordaunt. "Are not those bloodthirsty creatures the enemies alike of God and man. It is our solemn duty to destroy them!"

"I was not aware before that the chaplains of your navy ever encountered active service," said Allen, with a smile at the earnest manner of the chaplain's reply.

"If we fight with the men for a victory that we have prayed for," answered the chaplain, "they will be sure to believe in our sincerity."

"That is so!" replied Seymour, with a smile. "You see, lieutenant, we have a model chaplain, who believes in works as well as words!"

"So I perceive, sir. He must be a valuable auxiliary on board your vessel."

"He is, indeed. Why, he is quite a sailor, withal. He can take an observation as well as the master: work ship; and to-night, if we overhaul those bloody buccaneers, you will see how well he can handle a sword."

"Does he understand knotting and splicing?" asked Allen. And he glanced at Maraquita.

Though she did not understand nautical terms, the lady seemed to comprehend the meaning of that question, for the red blood again flushed her cheek and mantled her brow.

Seymour saw the look and blush, and in a moment comprehended the drift of the question.

"Yes, very well," he answered. "He has had several occasions to practice since he has been on this station, and I assure you is completely *au fait* at the business."

"If he intends to join our expedition to-night, I may ask a trial of his skill before we go, for fear that he may be incapacitated for acting before we return," said Allen. "To be brief and to the point, Mr. Mordaunt," he continued, "this lady and myself are engaged to be married; and as there is no legal impediment to our union, the ceremony might be performed here, which should have been performed in the first port I reached."

"Certainly; and it will afford me sincere pleasure to act upon the happy occasion, and to tie a knot which no mortal can justly untie," said the chaplain.

Maraquita having excused herself and retired to her room, Allen gave his visitors a brief account of her recent romantic adventures, withholding for her sake the knowledge that he had of her father's complicity with the pirates. In truth, he had withheld it from her so far as he could, though she could not but know something of it. He knew that she was not to blame for any evil which her father might have done, or might do; and he was not one of that mite-souled, narrow-minded class which think that the bad act of one person taints the blood of every one connected with him by blood.

CHAPTER XLII.

Marriage, where heart clings to heart and Nature's laws are not transgressed, is a holy thing. Otherwise, it is a confounded humbug. There is my opinion given gratis, and I hope

with sufficient brevity to suit all anxious inquirers after that opinion.

And there is no ceremony more awe-inspiring to a thinking mind—not even that which consigns "dust to dust," and gives soul-forsaken mortality to the worm. I have witnessed it in the gloomy shadows of old cathedrals—in the gayer churches of pharasaical Christendom—in the oaken halls of staunch ships, in the broad aisle of the lofty forest, and have ever felt that that linking of the destinies of two beings—that utterance of vows which none should break—(alas! how many do)—was a solemn, a holy thing.

And when Lieutenant Allen stood by the side of Maraquita de Regla in the neat cabin of that schooner—glad, he in his neat uniform, she in a robe as spotless as her own bosom—surrounded by his friends, the officers who had weathered many a storm in his company, the low, deep voice of the chaplain rising in prayer, the scene was as solemn as any that man ever witnessed. Every breath but that of God's minister was hushed—every look was serious—every heart seemed to feel that the time and the ceremony made the place holy.

The binding vows there uttered—the sacred benediction given, and Maraquita wept tears of joy, as many a bride has done before, and will do yet; for she was a wife—the wife of him to whom her young, pure heart had been given. And with manly pride he kissed her white brow, and inly swore that never, never should she regret the hour that was then passing. Neither of them thought how soon they might be divorced by that stern Judge whose law admits of no appeal—how soon the icy shadow of death might fall athwart the path now sunny bright.

The ceremony over, Allen received the congratulations of his brother officers as well as those of his English friends; and more than one glass of sparkling wine was drunk to the health of a bride so fair, and a groom so brave. And before he had an idea of it, else he would have begged them to save their powder, each vessel opened with a commander's salute in his honor; and their crews, on being called to "splice the main-brace" in honor of the event, made the air ring with their congratulating cheers.

Lord Seymour, who had none of the stiffness of land-lubberish aristocracy—for he had been bred from his boyhood in the service—was particularly gay, declaring it to be "the jolliest, best time he had seen since he had left the chalky shores of old Britannia," and was contented to send out his boat with Allen's sailing-master to pilot the *Medusa* into an anchorage in the bay, that he might stay and enjoy the cheerful society of his new-found friends. He could appreciate it the more now, for he had served against us in the war of 1812 and '14, and been taken in the hard-fought action between the *Constitution* and *Guerriere* and then experienced that courtesy with which an American ever treats a conquered foe, and formed an esteem for the nation which no after-time could wash away. And singular as it may seem, men who have fought together, if ever after they become friends, are apt to be much more ardent in their friendship than those who have never quarreled or been opposed the one to the other.

The day passed gayly on. The English frigate came into the anchorage, was saluted by the Americans and returned the compliment. All the vessels were dressed in gay colors; and if the pirates had any spies abroad, they might well wonder what great holiday was this, thus celebrated. A superb dinner was given on board the *Alligator*. But it is not my humor, even if it is my province, to describe the bridal festivities—I have other work to do.

Allen, joyous as was the occasion, and much as he endeavored to make every one around him participate in the pleasure which he felt, did not for a moment forget his duty, and the armors of the vessels were busied in seeing that every weapon was in order—the gunners saw to the ammunition—the coxswain of every boat saw to its oars and equipments, and the men all knew, that when night came on there was work ahead for them, from which some would, in all probability, never return. But such thoughts as these never check the hilarity of a true sailor. He is almost always a believer in "destiny," and seldom looks ahead for trouble, believing that it will come soon enough without his sighing for it.

"I do not wish to dissuade you from the honor which you seek, or the fame which suc-

cess will give you," said Lord Seymour to Allen, as the latter toward night began to particularly superintend the preparations for the night expedition; "but under the circumstances, there is not an officer of us all who would not justify you in remaining on board your vessel this evening, instead of leading the attack. If some of us single men get knocked in the head, it will be small loss to us, and a step of promotion to the lucky one below us. But were you to fall, it would be death to your young bride."

"If I knew that I should fall, I still should lead my men to-night," said Allen, firmly, but with a gloomy sadness in his tone and look that was long remembered by him whom he addressed. "Yet I thank you for the suggestion, for I know that it is based on very kind motives."

"You do me only justice in saying so," responded the English captain. "And since you insist upon going, you shall have a full chance for the credit of the thing. I shall place myself and men under your command, and let you control the expedition."

"My lord, you are too generous."

"Not a bit of it, my dear fellow. I am only sorry that you will endanger your life when it has become doubly valuable to you."

Maraquita, with gratitude in her throbbing heart, overheard this conversation; and though there was agony in the thought that he might fail, she could not but love her noble husband all the better because no motive or excuse would draw him aside from the path of duty. She applauded his resolution in silence, while she prayed that every peril might be averted from his dear form. Hers was a Spanish woman's heart—not a Spaniard's heart, dear reader, for the men of that nation have dwindled down into cowardly, worthless things of late years. But their women have not deteriorated in the same ratio. Why, I know not. But such is the case. Look at the Cubans, though one hundred to one against their Castilian masters, yet bowing to the most tyrannical rule in the civilized world. And when such a hero as Lopez rises to aid them in casting off the yoke of slavery, they are the first to betray him, to shout at his murder, and to aid in the cowardly butchery. But this is not a part of my story—only a drop of the bitterness that experience among such hounds has squeezed out of my nature.

Back to my pen-path. By the time that night fell, every available boat from the three American vessels and from the British frigate, was manned with armed crews. The flags of the two nations floated side by side in the same friendly breeze, for the only contest now was to be which would be foremost in punishing the red-handed enemies of all the world.

The chaplain, who had laid aside his black coat and white cravat, sat, in a sailor's jacket and a stout leathern cap, by the side of Lord Seymour, in his gig, and every officer was in his boat, except Allen alone, who was bidding adieu to his fond, but now pale and trembling bride. For the shadow of gloom which, in spite of his efforts, had fallen on his heart more than once during the afternoon, had reached her heart, and she now clung to him with a foreboding that they would meet no more in life. He felt—alas! sadly felt—that foreboding, but he hushed it down and would not let it reach her ears.

"Heaven bless you, dearest—I must go, for my men await my coming. Keep up a good heart, I will return victorious in a few hours, and my duty done, will give my time to love and you!" he said, as he pressed her warmly to his noble breast.

"God guard and keep you, my life!" she sobbed.

One thrilling embrace—one warm kiss, and he was gone. The next moment she knew that he was in his boat at the head of his men, so cheer after cheer reached her ears. But they fell sadly upon her heart, and she went into her state-room to weep and to pray for him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Colcefrinas, although weakened by loss of blood and his almost superhuman exertions in the night attack upon the American vessels, rapidly regained some strength; for his was not a spirit or a will to yield to bodily weaknesses, and will and strength of mind has ever more to do in rapid cures than a surgeon's skill. So, on the third or fourth day after he received his wounds, he was so far recovered as to be able to move slowly about his room, and to sit up and converse with such of his

officers as he chose to admit into his presence.

He had seen Monona but once since she left him in such terrific anger to go and see her daughter, and then she passed him in sullen and moody silence, not even asking him where her daughter was. This did not displease him; for he had been fully satisfied that in tongue-battle she was more than a match for him, and so long as she avoided and did not actually annoy him, he cared little what became of her, or what she did; for if he had ever felt any love for her, that feeling was now utterly banished from his heart, and to say the least, indifference, if not dislike, had taken its place.

But once had he seen her until about noon of the day succeeding her second night visit to the American vessels. Then she came from her chamber, looking as calm and contented as if she had never been pained or angered, as if nothing whatever disturbed her. He, with all his knowledge of human character, might have mistrusted that "calm," but he did not seem to. He glanced carelessly at her as she passed in silence through the room where he sat, but made no remark.

When she had gone out, he said to Solano, who was by his side: "It is time that we saw or heard something from Mariana! I do not think it will take her long to discover what we desire. She possesses the wit of a woman with the courage of a man!"

Scarcely had these words passed his lips when a hurried step was heard, and the subject of his thoughts and words made her appearance. Her face was pale and anxious—her manner nervous, and full of agitation.

"You have news?" cried Colcefrinas, hurriedly.

"I have. It is not good. The rendezvous is known to the enemy, and you will be attacked to-night."

"Who is the traitor that has betrayed us?"

"I cannot tell, my master!" said Mariana, and she turned deathly pale, and trembled like a reed shaking in a gale.

"Do you know?" asked Colcefrinas, and his keen eyes seemed to read her very soul.

"I do, my master. I can not lie to you—I do!"

"And will not tell?"

"Oh, my master, spare me—do not ask me!" and she dropped on her knees before him, and kissed his hands, while hot tears rained down in showers from her great black eyes.

In an instant Colcefrinas divined all; and with a strong effort completely mastering his passions, and seeming to be perfectly calm, he said, in the most gentle tone: "You need not, my poor Mariana—you need not. Rise and go to your own room to take some rest. But spare a moment—you say we will be attacked to-night."

"Yes, my master. At midnight a beacon will be shown at the outer point of the winding entrance to the bay—it is to guide your destroyers here."

"It will guide them to death. We will now show them that we learned something of them the other night. But what meant the cannonading we heard to-day?"

"I know not. It was nearly dawn when I escaped from the vessel, and I had to row far to windward, among the islands, to escape the sight of their guard-boats, which were rowing along the coast. I heard the guns fired as if for a salute, and supposed that more vessel had joined them!"

"Likely. Do you think they know of the stronghold and treasure vaults in the mountains?"

"No more than the Señorita de Regla has told them, and she knows not where they are!"

"It is well. Retire now, my good child, and rest—by-and-by I will have you called!"

Mariana's face flushed with joy. He spoke to her so kindly. She again kissed his hand, and then retired as he bade her.

But the moment that she was gone, the bland look upon the face of Colcefrinas changed; and even Solano, who knew him so well, was almost terrified at the terrible change which his anger made in his face.

"The tigress was right!" he hissed. "She is not to be despised! But she is to be punished! The traitress shall dearly rue the hour when first the thought of treachery to us entered her heart!"

"To whom do you allude?" asked Solano.

"To Monona. She it is who has betrayed us! She it was who informed the cursed

Yankees of our intended surprise, and who caused the loss of half our best men, and gained for me these crippling wounds. I have been blind not to guard against her, knowing that a jealous woman will not stop at anything. But she has had help. She could not go alone, for she has not Mariana's skill with the oar. We must quietly find out whom she has in her confidence, who has rowed her about in the many little pleasure-excursions . . . has recently undertaken. To you Solano, I intrust this delicate work, while I confront her; and then we must make haste to prepare to receive our friends to-night. If they do obtain a foothold here, we have yet a place of retreat which they cannot force—if they do, it will be the worse for them, for if the worst comes to the worst, my own hand shall send all to hell together. I know that you never will desert me!"

"Never—never!" said Solano, as he grasped the hand of the desperate chief.

"Then haste to do my bidding. But let no agitation of yours announce our discoveries. When you have found those men out, secure them where they cannot be seen or spoken to except by their guard, and bid the latter neither to ask nor answer any questions! But first tell that she-tigress that I want to see her; and if she refuses to come, have her arrested and placed in the strong-room below, without causing any excitement, if you can. If she comes, send two of the trustiest men to await my orders!"

The officer bowed, and Colcefrinas, who, by a great effort, had again become calm, was left for the moment alone.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"You wanted me—so said your messenger! I am here."

Monona, when she entered the room and uttered these words to Colcefrinas, looked as quiet and innocent as if never a storm had raged in her heart, or a bitter thought emanated from her mind.

The pirate chief looked at her intently for a minute or two, without speaking.

"Sit down," said he, at last. "Your recent exertions must have fatigued you!"

"Not at all. One scarcely feels fatigued when they are in pursuit of pleasure."

"Then you have been in the pursuit of pleasure?"

"Yes."

"And found it?"

"Not yet—but soon expect to do so!"

"When—at midnight, to-night, when you light the beacon on the outer point?"

For a moment, the woman's forced composure gave way, and the color left her cheek, and she trembled; for she felt that he had gained some knowledge of her secret. But how, she could not divine; for her boat's crew were sworn by terrible oaths to be true to her, and her only, and they did not know of the arrangement to light the beacon. That had been made with Allen alone. But her sterner nature in a moment gave her strength to meet his glance, and she replied:

"You speak in words which I do not understand!"

"You need not add falsehood to the crime of treachery, madam. I know all of your machinations and intentions, and when the Americans come to-night, they will meet a most fervent welcome. I shall be fully prepared to meet them!"

"Very well, sir, I give you joy in your prospects. But as you are lame, I would advise you to make due provision to assist you in running away again!"

"You are thoughtful, madam. And for fear that harm may come to you before the hour when you are to light the beacon, I will have you placed under guard!"

And as he said this, he made a motion to the men who had been sent by Solano, and they at once advanced to seize her.

"Back—back—lay a hand upon me and you die!" she cried; and in an instant she changed from the dove into the tigress. Her dark eyes fairly blazed, as she drew a pistol from her bosom, and with her back to the wall, confronted the men. For an instant they hesitated.

"Cowards! She is but a woman!" said the chief.

One of the men sprang forward to seize her. The action was his last, for a ball crashed through his brain ere he had taken two steps forward. The other, with an oath, sprang to seize her before she could draw another weapon, but he was too slow. She drew another

pistol before he could reach her—fired—and he sunk with a low groan to the floor.

"I would serve you as I have them," she said, bitterly, to Colcefrinas, "if I did not reserve to myself the hope to see you hanged."

"Murderess—you shall die for this!" cried the excited chief. "Seize the she-devil!"

The last order was given to Solano, who, with a guard of men, had hurried in, attracted by the firing. And as they took her unawares, the desperate woman was instantly secured.

"Remove her to the strong-room below—she has slain your comrades, men, and betrayed us all! I will find a fitting punishment for her," said the chief.

Scarcely had they left the room in obedience to the order, with their prisoner, when Mariana, who had been awakened from slumber by the sound of the shots, hurried in.

"What is the matter, my master?" she asked. "Are you in peril?"

"It is past, good Mariana, it is past," he said, with a gentle smile. "Do not be disturbed, but rest now; for in a little time I shall call my officers to council, and then I shall need you."

The girl glanced at the bodies upon the floor, and knew that the chief had been in peril, but she questioned no further. He was safe, and the danger was past.

CHAPTER XLV

It was midnight; and at the head of the dense column of boats containing the united forces of English and Americans. Allen cautiously approached that part of the coast where Monona had promised to light a beacon which would lead them to the masked entrance to the bay of rendezvous. Another boat close by the side of his own, so near that low-voiced words could be heard from one to the other, contained Lord Seymour and his chaplain.

The night was not entirely obscure—the moon was up, but drifting clouds moving over the sky caused its light to fall only in patches here and there upon the earth.

"Is it not time that the beacon the woman promised was alight?" asked Seymour of Allen. "My watch says twelve."

"Mine also," replied Allen. "And we are near the shore. Ah, there the light flashes. She is true to her word."

A bright blaze was seen suddenly to spring up from beneath a bold bluff a little on their starboard bows—and by its light there seemed to be a group of persons standing there. Seeing a woman's dress, Allen exclaimed:

"It is the woman and her boat's crew. We are all right, and can go on safely."

Giving the order to his men to row on, Allen steered directly to the point, and the other boats followed. When within a few fathoms of the shore, he gave orders to the other boats to lie upon their oars, while he pulled to the shore to confer with the woman, and learn how matters stood ahead. He asked Seymour to land with him.

Allen was a few paces in advance, and had almost reached the group—which remained silent and motionless—when, with an exclamation of horror, he stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked Seymour, hurrying up.

"God of mercy! Look there—we ourselves are in peril, for the pirates are on their guard!" exclaimed Allen.

Both Seymour and his chaplain also paused in horror for a moment, for now they saw why the group had been silent and motionless. Each person—Monona and all of her boat's crew—was dead, and fastened in an erect position to stakes. Upon the breast of Monona was fastened a placard, with these words written upon it in letters of blood:

"Thus Colcefrinas punishes treason in his own camp! Let the Yankees advance. They will find a warm welcome!"

Allen and Seymour for a moment were silent; then the former said:

"We will advance—welcome or not welcome!"

"I see no inlet here or hereabouts," said Seymour. "The lips which would have told us how to steer are silent now."

"That is so; but from her previous description, I feel satisfied that the entrance is very near this spot," said Allen. "We can but look for it; and if we do not find it in the dark, we need only wait until morning. In truth, now that they have prepared for us, it seems to me that it were no more than prudent if we waited until we could see what was before us."

"I agree with you there, perfectly," said the Englishman. "I like, when I strike, to see where my blow falls; and if I am struck, to see where the blow comes from."

Allen, after this coincidence in his own opinion, did not deem it necessary to consult his officers further; but gave the order for his boats to fall back a few hundred yards, to a low island of bare sand which they had passed but a little while before, and which Monona had described as being near the hidden inlet.

Here the men were allowed to land, and directed to rest until further orders. Meanwhile, a couple of light boats were detached to reconnoitre along the shore, and to prevent any danger of surprise. But the night wore on, and nothing occurred to denote the vicinity of the foe.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Ere the day dawned, the drifting clouds thickened and darkened, and a thin, drizzling rain began to fall, and a murky fog arose which made the coast, close as it was, loom up vague and indistinct. The men did not seem to be in very high spirits, for though they knew a fight was almost certainly before them, the weather was not favorable for burning powder in. And the ghastly sight of the butchered woman and her boat's crew was rather disheartening; for they had no sympathy for the victims of the pirate chief, as they would have had, had they been comrades of their own, or even innocent persons who had not themselves been pirates. Allen was very gloomy, and he strove in vain to shake off the feelings which lay like a leaden weight upon his heart. Seymour noticed it, and strove to cheer him up.

"Take a drop of old cogniac from my flask!" said the warm-hearted Englishman. "We will soon whip these bloody sharks out of their nest, and then you will return to receive the praises and the smiles of your beautiful bride!"

"Seymour," responded the young officer, "I shall never see her again. I felt such would be the case when I parted from her, have felt it ever since, feel it now! It does not at all unman me, though it will be hard for her."

"Pooh, nonsense! Banish such thoughts, my dear fellow. Come, take a nip."

"No—thank you, no! I need no artificial stimulant to raise my spirits. It will be time for us to move in a few moments, and then you will see me as cheerful as ever. There comes the boat which I last sent out to try and discover the inlet. By the way they spring on their oars, the officer seems to be in haste, and has, I hope, discovered what he sought for."

"I hope he has; for this cursed rain pierces a fellow through and through," said the nobleman, as he took a pull at his flask to soften the feelings of the inner man.

"What news, Harkness?" cried Allen to the officer commanding the boat, when he pulled up within hail.

"I have found the inlet, sir!" responded the officer. "But it is strongly guarded by men planted at batteries in the turns; but it can be flanked overland, I think, sir, and the men driven from the guns, when we can go in with the boats without loss."

"Thanks for the suggestion!" said Allen. "We will first run down to the inlet, and see how it looks. Come into my boat and act as a pilot, if you please."

The officer obeyed the order; and immediately after, Allen gave the word for all the men to embark, and leading the column of three boats abreast, he moved on to the spot where the officer told him the inlet opened.

It was no wonder that they passed it undiscovered so often as they had, for they were within a few boats' lengths of the angular opening in the cliff before it could be seen, though they were looking for it. Here, relying upon the information which the officer had gained in a daring reconnoissance, Allen divided his men, directing two parties, one of Englishmen and the other of Americans, to scale the cliffs and drive the men from the batteries, while he, with the rest, attacked and drove them in from the front. To Seymour he gave the command of the land-forces, seconded by his own first lieutenant, while the gallant chaplain kept command of Seymour's gig, which kept close alongside that of the leader.

The land-parties being on shore, the order

to advance was given, and up the rugged cliffs went the hardy tars, with many a wild cheer, many a hearty hurrah. Soon dropping shots were heard from their guns, and then rattling volleys told that they were warmly engaged.

"Forward men! Spring to your oars—now comes our time!" cried Allen, and with one wild hurrah the boat column dashed into the narrow entrance. Soon, at a short turn, they met the black muzzles of a battery frowning in their very faces, but the diversion on the shore saved them from what must have been utter destruction, for the guns were so placed as to completely enfilade that reach of the channel. But the gunners had been shot down at their guns, or had fled in boats which they had ready to use, in case of being forced to retreat.

The boats pressed on, making turn after turn, each of which was guarded by a battery, but from all of which the men had been driven by Seymour's dashing attack, until at last they came to an open stretch, from which they could see the inner harbor, with its vessels all drawn up broadside to the shore, with their guns so bearing as to sweep the water with their deadly contents. Leaving boats to take in the parties which had acted so gallantly on the land, Allen made scarce a moment's pause now, but dashed on as rapidly as possible.

Scarcely had he reached the open water when the fire of the whole piratical line opened upon him, and a battery in front of the house by the main flag-staff on shore, poured in a terrible fire.

"On my brave boys—on—the blood-thirsty fiends shall pay treble for every drop of blood they shed!" he shouted, as standing up in his boat, he urged his staunch oarsmen onward.

"Forward, for God and the holy Saint George!" cried the brave chaplain.

"Onward, and let the deuce take him that's hindmost!" cried the gallant Seymour.

And though man after man fell dead at his oars, and the shot fell like hail among them, the boats pressed swiftly on in the face of the deadly fire, not pausing to return it, but seeking only to come hand to hand with the scourges before them.

Allen, still standing up in his boat, conspicuous for his courage, and but too good a mark with his commanding figure, still led the van, his clear voice heard plainly above the rattle of fire-arms and the dash of plunging oars. Seymour as well as other of the officers, though they could not but admire his reckless courage, begged him not to expose himself so much; but he did not heed their entreaties.

"On—on—sweep the cursed fiends from the face of the earth," was his cry.

Bravely, nobly the advancing boats dashed upon the line of piratical boats, and though they were defended with the sternness of despair, the Americans swept down the pirates like grain before the sickle of the reaper. The pirates retreated back, step by step, firing each vessel as they were forced to abandon it. And their conquerors were thus forced literally to follow them over a wall of fire. But they did not pause for smoke or flames who had not stopped for the showers of iron and of lead, but on with thirsty steel in their hands they sprang.

Allen had at last gained the shore, where Colcefrinas himself, heading his men, forgetful of his wound, and raging like a wounded lion, fought.

"Coward—one blow with you, and I am content!" shouted Allen, as he saw him.

Alas! those words were the last that ever his brave lips uttered. While yet his taunting voice rung out upon the air, and ere Colcefrinas could speak his reply, the fatal bullet from some random hand sped on its course and the hero of the day, the gallant Allen, fell forward on the crimsoned sand—a corpse.

For a moment, his men, appalled with their loss, and grief-stricken, faltered and fell back; but when Seymour lifted him from the earth, and shouted: "Forward, Americans—forward and avenge your leader!" they faltered no longer.

With one united cry for revenge, they pressed forward, and the remainder of the pirates began to yield. Colcefrinas was again wounded, and twice was almost in the hands of his foes. But Mariano, with her long, black hair streaming in the air, her dark eyes flashing fire, and her dress half-womanish, yet partially such as she had worn when acting as page,

each time dashed in like a tigress before him, and beating back the astonished Americans, rescued him from their hands. At last, the pirates were pressed into his house as a last resort; and thither they would have been followed, had not the building, in a moment after, been shattered into a thousand fragments, by the explosion of a mine beneath it.

Seymour and the remainder of the officers supposed that Colcefrinas and the rest of his band, rendered hopeless by the desperation of their situation, had themselves destroyed the building and perished in its ruins.

Not so. By a safe avenue, all that had survived the terrible slaughter in the vessels and on the beach, now headed by Mariano, were hastening unseen to their last stronghold in the mountains, bearing with them their disabled chief, who with his own hand had fired the train that blew his house into the air—the smoke and dust completely hiding them and thus securing their retreat.

Finding no more resistance, the attacking force now completed their work of destruction, destroying every boat and building, spiking the guns which had done so much damage, and cutting down every tree which bore fruit. Then silently and sadly they gathered together their dead, and prepared to return to their vessels. They had conquered the enemy; destroyed their vessels, and utterly desolated their rendezvous; and, as they supposed, completely annihilated them; but the victory had been dearly won.

The most of those who fell on the English and American side were, with brief but solemn ceremony, buried on the shore—the pirates being left as they fell, to rot and whiten the earth with their bones.

But the remains of Allen, nobly beautiful even in death, were carefully taken up and laid in his boat, with his country's flag for a pall and rowed by his sorrow-stricken crew, carried back to the head of the column which he had led, so that his widowed bride might have the sad satisfaction of gazing once more on him whom she had loved so well, and who had fallen while yet the sunlight of bliss was warm upon his brow.

CHAPTER XLVII.

It was almost night when the returning boats reached the vessels. With kindly feelings and tender sensibility, Seymour and the chaplain, Mr. Mordaunt, preceded the boat which contained the body of poor Allen some distance, to endeavor to break the news of her gallant husband's untimely fall, as gently as possible, to poor Maraquita.

To their utter surprise, they found that lady seated in the cabin, calm and quiet, but with the pallor of death on her cheek, which was made more visible by the dress which she wore. It was black. She had already donned the robes of mourning.

She smiled gently, but oh, how sadly! as they came in, and in a low tone said, as she motioned them to seats:

"You are kind. You come to speak words of consolation to the widow! You need not shake your heads—it is not mercy, for I know all. I saw him when he fell—I knew he never would return!"

The officers thought that her reason had left her, for she could not have known positively of the fall of her husband. But mysterious influences sometimes bear to us the knowledge of great sorrows. And so there had come to her some spirit unseen—but felt—perhaps his own—which whispered to her heart, that thenceforth it must beat alone.

Seeing her so calm, the chaplain thought that he might utter a few words of consolation consonant with the duties of his holy profession, and endeavored to do so. But she did not seem to heed his words.

"Why do they not bring him to me?" she said. "I wish to look upon his pale face! Bring him to me quickly!"

Seymour left the cabin, and tears were coursing down the brave man's cheeks, for he had never seen a grief so still and so very pitiful as hers. Had she shrieked and sobbed and torn her hair, the violence of her demonstrations would have destroyed the intensity of its effect upon the witnesses. But in her sorrow, there was an utter abandonment—an intensity of desolation more potent than many sobs and tears.

Seymour met the men, who were carefully lifting the corpse of their almost idolized commander on board. Too much agitated to speak, he motioned to the cabin and led the way. The body was carried in and laid down

upon the transom seat, where in life he had sat by her side, and told her how entirely his heart was her own.

With that strange calmness, which told that the very fountains of her heart were burned dry by the sirocco of the terrible sorrow which had so suddenly come upon her, the stricken widow went and knelt down by the side of the body, and raising the flag from over the pale face, kissed it tenderly. A proud smile seemed to rest upon the features, for the ball had pierced his heart, and he had died so suddenly, that no expression of pain had time to freeze upon his face.

"He is *very* handsome? Don't you think so? *very* handsome!" she said, in a low, plaintive tone, which went home to every heart that heard it, and which brought tears to every eye there. "This is our bridal night!" she said, after a pause. And then she shivered as with cold, and rose and stood for a moment as if listening. "I hear the glad cathedral bells?" she murmured. "Come love—come!" and she reached out her hand as if to lead him with her. The next instant, though, she reeled and fell, so stiff and cold that all thought her dead. But Doctor O'Shaughnessy, who had been weeping like a child, sprung to her aid, and found that she was only in a swoon—her overstrained spirit had not strength to sustain her body.

Restoratives were used, and she was borne to her couch, while it was decided by the officers now in command to take the vessel at once to Matanzas, where, if the lady desired, she could be restored to her father. And the intention of Allen to go there and seize the "Pilot" was not forgotten.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

When the American vessels, accompanied by the Medusa, reached the harbor of Matanzas, they found that they were a few hours too late to capture the supposed pirate. She had either finished her repairs sooner than was anticipated, or gone to sea with some of them left undone; for, much to the surprise and chagrin of the consul—who supposed he was keeping a close watch upon her—she slipped off and went to sea, or somewhere out of sight, during the night previous to the arrival of the pirate-hunting fleet.

The people of Matanzas seemed to be really glad to hear of the destruction of the pirates. Perhaps they were. And the Marquis de Regla, it need not be doubted, was glad; for Colcefrinas had become to him more than a terror: and the report of the Americans was, like their belief, that Colcefrinas was slain—had perished in the explosion.

Nor did the marquis mourn for the death of Allen, because he bore no good-will to the Americans as a nation; but he did grieve sincerely at the condition in which his daughter had come back to him: for, as we have said more than once in this story, he loved her with all the love that was in his nature. She had become—or, in fact, had been—from the hour when her husband's body was brought to her, harmlessly, hopelessly, pitifully insane.

It was almost heart-rending to hear her talk. Fancying at one time that he was by her side, she would address him in the fondest and most endearing terms. Then again, seeming to think him temporarily absent, she would plead in tearful agony for him to come back to her. Still again, seeming to see him in the red melee of a terrible fight, she would throw up her arms, and shriek to Heaven to save him; and in that mood she would fall away into convulsions, which barely left her alive.

She had to be watched constantly, lest she should destroy herself. And most hard of all, to her father, she did not recognize him. Nor did she seem to remember any of her old friends, when they came to see her. Two persons only could get rational replies from her—these two were the only ones whom she would call by name: one was Lord Seymour, who had become very deeply interested in her; the other was his chaplain, Mr. Mordaunt. Seeming to recognize them as her husband's last friends on earth, she appeared to be fond of their society, and was ever child-like and gentle when they were with her. But duty would not permit of their lengthened stay in port; for soon, though terrible their chastisement had been of the pirates, reports of new outrages along the coast came to their ears; and they found that the pirates, instead of being utterly exterminated, were yet numerous, and even powerful on the coast. Therefore, both the English and American men-of-war

were soon off again to renew their exertions to destroy the destroyers.

CHAPTER XLIX.

It was night—some brief time after poor Maraquita had been brought to her home, and her father sat with her in his favorite sitting-room, whither he had her brought as often as he could, in hopes that time, and his presence, and tender kindness, might work some change in her condition of mind. Her state had so worn his heart, that in the few days which had elapsed, the weight of many years seemed to have accumulated upon his head.

"Poor child!—poor child!" he uttered, sadly, as he looked upon his yet very beautiful daughter, whose face, though pale, was a thousand times more spiritual now than it had ever been, and whose entire appearance was as nearly akin to what poets would term *angelical* as it could be. "Poor child! poor child!"

"Who is poor?" she murmured—"who is poor? No one that loves is poor! My love and I are rich!"

"Oh! curse—curse even the *memory* of Colcefrinas!" said the unhappy father. "Had it not been for that wretch, my child might have been happy; and I not the miserable being that I am! Curses—a thousand curses on the name of Colcefrinas!"

"Old man, you should not curse so loudly when the devil is at your elbow!" said a voice but too well known to De Regla; and he groaned in agony, as he turned and saw him whom he might now well deem an enemy standing before him.

"Can hell yawn and throw up that which belongs to it!" groaned the marquis.

"You thought me dead, and yourself freed from your engagements, did you not?" cried Colcefrinas, with a sneer. "Because a few Yankees, backed by the English, gained a slight advantage over me, you supposed that Colcefrinas and his power was crushed! You are mistaken, ancient comrade—widely mistaken. I am yet afloat; and 'twill be long before I strike my flag! Long!—long! Do you hear me? Why do you stand all agape? I'm no ghost, but real flesh and blood—as the vessels off your coast begin to learn. I shall reap a rich harvest, now that the Yankees have boasted that they have exterminated the pirates! Their vessels will no longer fear to sight our coasts until I've taken enough of them to make them feel that I am yet alive. It's rare sport, this man-hunting—rare sport! I see that you have your pretty daughter back again. Black becomes her. I am glad that I helped to dress her so becomingly. So ho, Señorita Maraquita, how are you?"

And the rude pirate strode up to her, and reached out his hand, as if he would touch her.

"Villain! lay but a finger on my child—but touch her person with your polluting hand—and I'll slay you like a dog, as you are!" shouted the father, recovering the presence of mind which the sudden entrance of the pirate had deprived him of. "Leave the room and the palace instantly—leave it, or your fate is sealed!"

"Let him stay. I want to talk to him! Is not this the butcher that slew my lamb?" asked Maraquita, who had been looking at the pirate steadily ever since he entered, and acting as if she were trying to arouse herself from some dream. "Who are you, man—who are you?"

She went up to him and laid her thin hand upon his shoulder, and looked him so steadily in the face that his brazen impudence shrunk from her look, and he actually cowered beneath her dazzling eye.

"Why do you not speak? You have the form of a man, but you shake and tremble. Men never tremble—my love does not tremble. He is brave: you are a coward!"

"This is well put on!" said the pirate; "you are a good actress, Maraquita. But come with me: you have been away from me too long. Come with me, my pretty!"

And he passed his arm around her slender waist.

Like a flash of lightning leaping from a cloud flew the sword of her father from its scabbard; and it would have been used before Colcefrinas could draw his blade and stand upon guard, had not the poor maniac girl, with a vehement gesture, put back the blade.

"Do not slay him!" she said. "Man must not slay him. It is written in the book of fate! Man must not slay him. This is not the place where he must die. He has a grand

hall, full of jewels, and gold, and beautiful things. I have seen it. Oh! it was grand—very grand. I was a queen there!"

"And shall be again, my beautiful. Come with me—come!"

"Yes, I will go with you—yes—yes—yes! I will go with you." And she retreated step by step in front of the pirate, motioning her almost paralyzed father back as she went.

The wretched marquis stood for a moment as if spell-bound, and then, with a wild cry of agony, stepped but a single step forward, and fell senseless to the floor.

When he recovered his senses, his startled servants were around him, but his daughter was not there. He asked where she was, but no one knew. And when he spoke of Colcefrinas having carried her off, they thought that he was raving; for report told everywhere that the pirate was dead, and no one had seen a stranger in the palace, or been a witness to the departure of Maraquita—who had been probably led away through some secret passage known to the pirate; for all of the old Spanish buildings abounded in such.

CHAPTER L.

In the grandest hall of his cavern fastness, Colcefrinas held festival. With yet a hundred followers left, and his heart more full of bitterness toward all mankind than it had ever been before, he had committed several terrible outrages on vessels and their hapless crews which had fallen into his hands along the coast, and made his name doubly a terror on the seas. And now, having returned from his daring visit to Matanzas with the daughter of the Marquis de Regla in his power, he determined to have that which his sensual men were ever ready for—a feast.

Mariana was there as well as Maraquita, and both were dressed in a style which queens might have envied. Their forms blazed with jewels. And never were more lovely forms so richly adorned. Maraquita, who seemed to have fully recovered her senses—though to be with him, a murderer and wretch, were a proof of insanity—seemed to be more his favorite than Mariana; but, stranger than all—though one sat on his right and the other on his left at the banquet-table—the wild heart of Mariana did not seem to beat with jealousy. She even smiled on Maraquita, and spoke kind words to her.

The latter quite as pale as when last we saw her, and yet more ethereal, said, as Colcefrinas filled a golden cup of wine for her:

"You have given this banquet in honor of me, have you not, Colcefrinas?"

"Yes, lovely one—yes; you are the queen of the night; and from your lips must come the first toast of the evening. Fill, men; fill to the brim, for a pirate-queen will give you a toast that you all can drink! Fill, each one—fill to the brim!"

"What is that?" asked Maraquita. And she pointed to the head of a serpent, rudely carved, appearing to be a singular ornament to the back of the kind of dais, or throne on which he sat.

"My guard, pretty one—my guard! Is it not, my men?"

Some of them turned pale, and others laughed, as he asked the question. They knew well what it was, and that a match applied to the mouth of that serpent would fire a train which would blow them all into atoms.

"Yes, yes—I have heard of it before," she said. "With it you hold, indeed, a kingly power in your hands—the power of death."

And she smiled—smiled so strangely that it was wonderful that he had no thought of the fire in her brain and heart which was now all ablaze.

"Your toast, fair queen—your toast," he cried.

Slowly she rose; and lifting the golden cup in her left hand, while her right seemed to be carelessly playing with a golden-hilted and jeweled dagger which adorned her belt, she raised it, and as she looked Colcefrinas in the eye, she said:

"I drink to my dead husband. Murderer, go you to seek him." And as she but touched her lips to the glass, she drew the dagger with her other hand, and drove it to the very hilt in his breast. Then, before a word, except one cry of horror, could be uttered, or a hand stretched forth to prevent her, the brave girl seized a lighted lamp and touched the fatal train. With a wild cry of despair, some of the men sprang from their seats—others seemed rooted there. But not ten seconds elapsed,

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before the walls of the vast cavern seemed to rise to meet each other; and with a sound more dreadful than thunder, they came crashing together, burying wealth and mortality all in one terrible heap. Colcefrinas and his band were now, indeed, swept from the face of the earth—poor Allen was bravely avenged.

A few days after, while the Marquis de Regla lay upon his bed, near the point of death, a disfigured and shattered form was brought to his side. It was all that was left of poor Maraquita, who, surviving, had crept from the ruins of the pirate's treasure-house, that she might tell her father that his enemy was dead, and be buried by the side of her husband.

Reader, I have done.

THE END.

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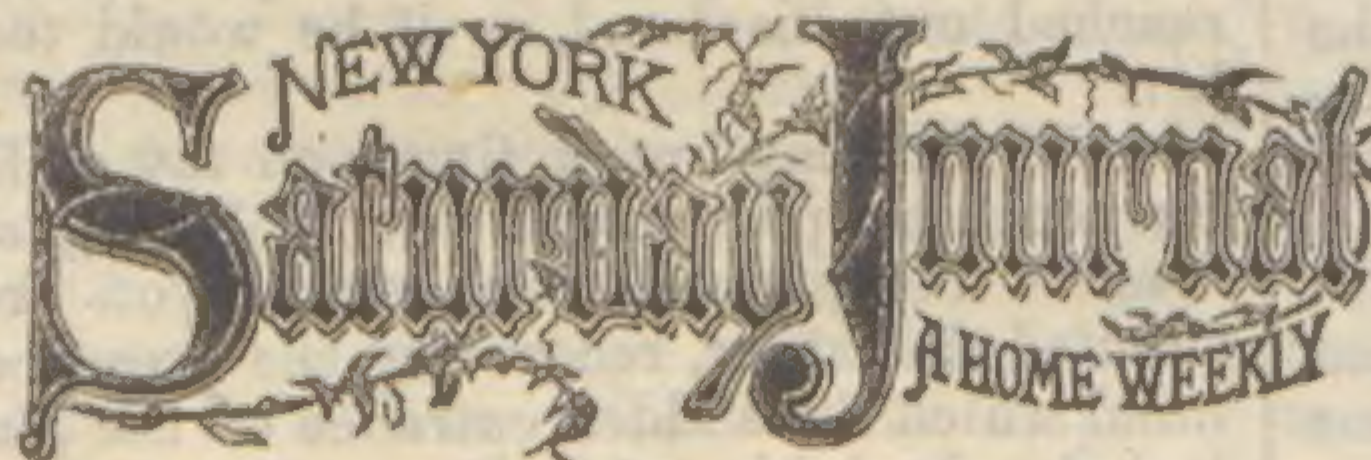
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